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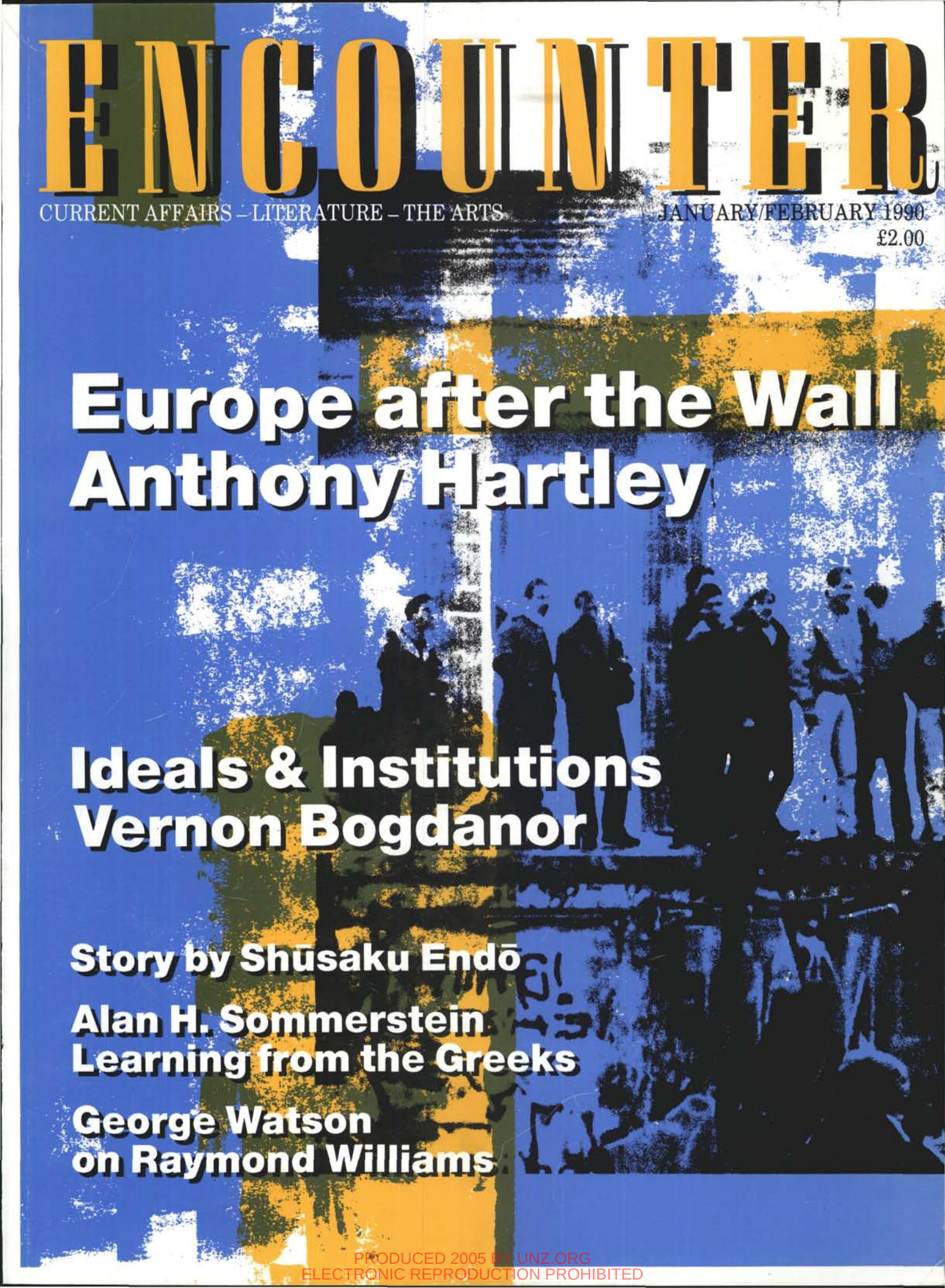

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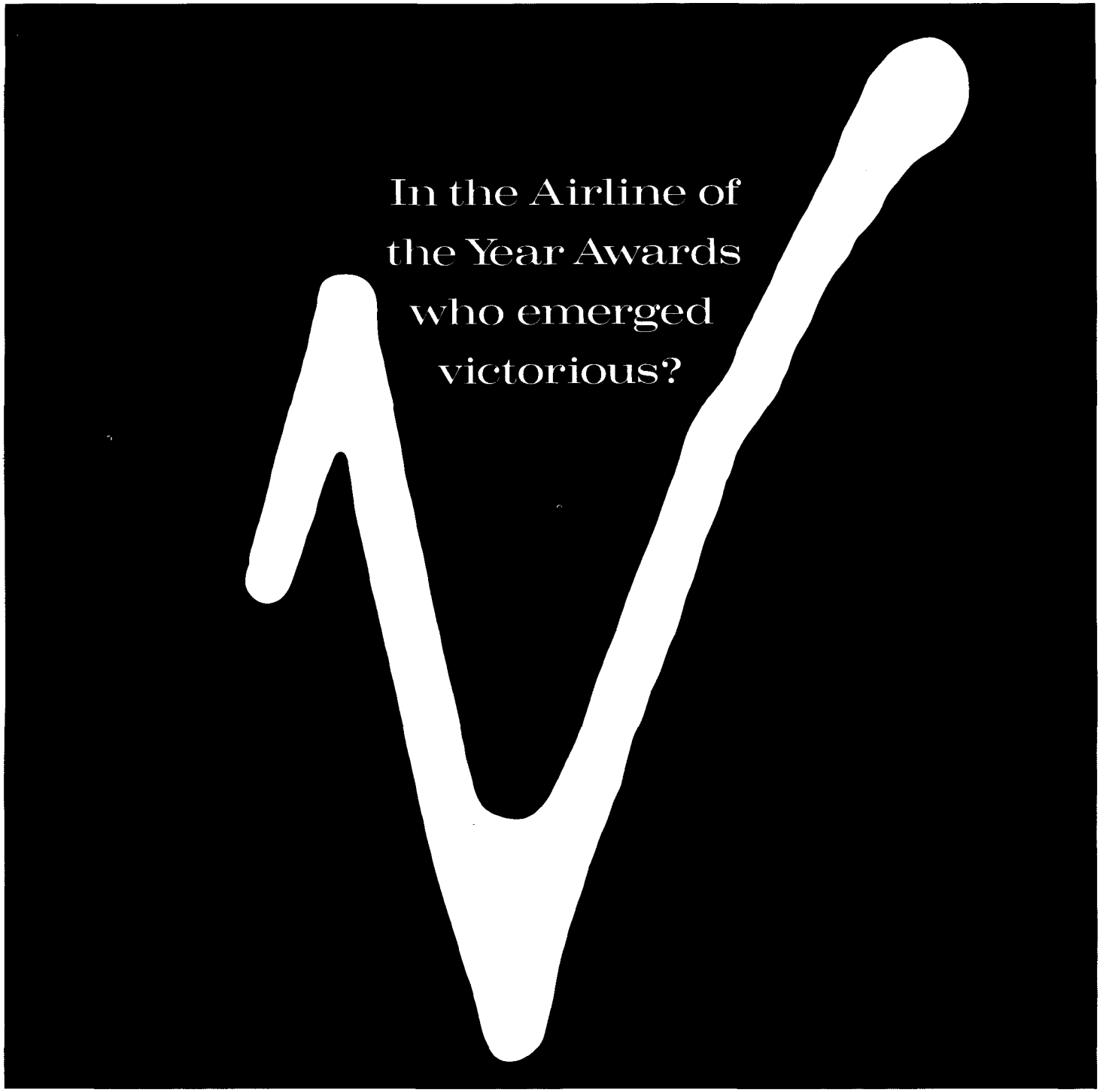

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ENCOUNTER

JANUARY-FEBRUARY 1990 VOL. LXXIV No. 1 ISSN 0013-7073

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© 1990 by Encounter Ltd. Ten issues a year (January-February and July-August are single issues). Per copy: UK £2.00: USA $4.50: Canada $5.00. Back numbers £3.00 ($6.00). Postage/packaging: 75p ($2.00). Annual subscription rates: see page 77. Address for all departments: Encounter Ltd., 44 Great Windmill Street, London W1V 7PA (01-434 3063): UK Trade Distributors: Cutlerglen, 13 Nevington Industrial Estate, Crampton Street, London SE17 3AZ (01-708 1308). Second-class postage paid at Rahway, NJ. US Postmaster: send address corrections to Encounter, c/o Mercury Airfreight International Ltd Inc., 2323 Randolph Avenue, Avenel, NJ 07001

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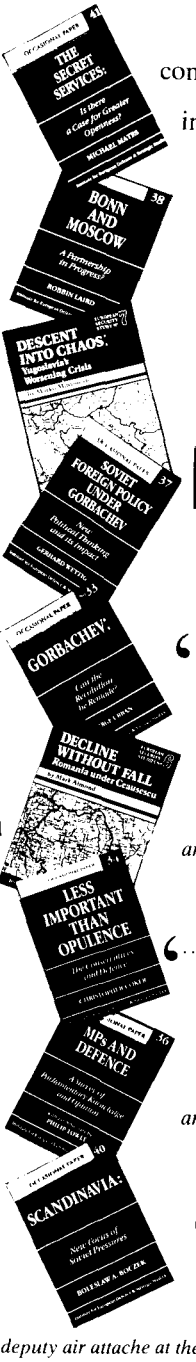

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Anthony Hartley

And the Wall Fell Down...

Mr Gorbachov & the New Europe

"AND IT CAME to pass, when the people heard the sound of the trumpet, and the people shouted with a great shout, that the wall fell down flat...." The people of East Germany have certainly shouted with a great shout, and there is something awe-inspiring about the rapidity and extent of the response. The breaching of the Berlin Wall is more than any of us could have hoped for even two months ago. Now this portentous event has taken place before the eyes of hundreds of thousands of Europeans, glued to their television screens. All of us watched with deep emotion the creeping monster, the Fafnir of the Cold War, defied and climbed and cracked with hammers by young Berliners. Suddenly the Wall seemed rickety and pathetic, a dead thistle, its malice exorcised, its victims released. This was a marvel of history, a sign that not all of its surprises are disagreeable.

Yet, in our joy and astonishment, we should not forget that there was nothing accidental about what has happened. If the people shouted, it was Mikhail Gorbachov who blew the trumpet. These events are part of a bold and rational policy, whose gradual unfolding has changed the face of Europe and is bringing the post-1945 political system to an end. Few exercises in foreign policy have been quite as successful as that conducted by the President of the Soviet Union over the last three to four years. His achievement has been to realise that the Atlantic Alliance, which faced the Warsaw Pact along the Elbe, was held together by the fear of Russia and, in particular, by the dread inspired by Moscow's peremptory handling of its East European satellites. The political repression and economic collapse which characterised these countries under the sway of the Brezhnev Doctrine were the best argument for a strong Atlantic security system, whose existence shackled the Soviet Union's freedom of action in Europe and increasingly placed a strain upon its resources. After the installation of Pershing and Cruise medium-range missiles in Western Europe, despite a massive Soviet propaganda campaign and violent demonstrations in many countries, it must have become evident to Mr Gorbachov that the bloc facing Russia could only be dissolved by reassurance. Only through a more flexible diplomacy could the Soviet Union hope to regain the initiative in Europe.

At what point Mr Gorbachov took a conscious decision to renew Russian policy in Europe and to what extent he was motivated by an increasing awareness of Soviet economic difficulties and the impossibility of sustaining an arms race with the United States remain obscure. At any rate he has consistently acted as though he felt the need to gain the confidence of Western countries. And he has paid for that confidence in real political concessions. By his Arms Control proposals, by the withdrawal of Russian troops from Afghanistan, by his willingness to settle local conflicts throughout the world, above all, by his apparent abandonment of the ecumenical claims of Communism, the Soviet leader has given pledges of his sincerity. In the years of *perestroika* and *glasnost* the Soviet Union has become a less frightening, if more turbulent, neighbour.

The policy of allowing—even encouraging—East European states to have democratically elected, non-Communist governments is part of the same process of conciliatory change. We have seen what has taken place in Bulgaria and East Germany. Now Czechoslovakia has followed suit.

THAT THIS ATTENTION to Western feelings has been successful in changing the view taken of the Soviet Union in Western Europe is evident. Over the past few years East-West relations in Europe have been transformed. Russia now appears clothed in the habiliments of benevolence and openness. To watch real political differences being expressed in the debates of the Supreme Soviet and a Russian leader answering hostile questions from the floor of the house is, in itself, enough to upset previous conceptions of a monolithic dictatorship. In Western Europe the fear of Russian aggression has pretty well disappeared from the consciousness of the general public, whatever experts may think. In the opinion polls Mr Gorbachov's popularity runs ahead of that of President Bush. Margaret Thatcher—never one to be "soft" on Communism—has praised him with a warmth rarely seen between statesmen of opposing alliances. He is certainly the man of his time—an almost inevitable recipient of a Nobel peace prize.

It is, therefore, hardly surprising that he should be calling the tune over the future of Germany. It was his visit to Berlin and his announcement to the East German leadership

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that Russian troops could not be used to maintain civil order that toppled Erich Honecker and set off the train of events which culminated in the opening of the Wall. The consequence has been that the question of German reunification is now on the agenda of every European statesman. We can hardly suppose that Mr Gorbachov did not know what he was doing. What is the objective of his European policy? What is the vision of a future Europe that lies behind the phrase "a common European home"?

Behind Mr Gorbachov's new look in Europe is some hard-headed realism as to the value of the satellite Communist régimes created by previous Russian leaders. For it seems clear that the Warsaw Pact has become worthless militarily and is disintegrating politically. All it adds to Soviet power is a few bases, which are probably more trouble than they are worth. The appearance of non-Communist governments in Hungary and Poland and events in East Germany are a tacit recognition of this fact. The advantages of this defusing of political tensions in Eastern Europe far outweigh any military gain from the previous situation.

However, if the Warsaw Pact is to disappear, then, as Dominic Lieven pointed out in ENCOUNTER ("A Community of Interests", September-October 1989), the Soviet leader will try to ensure that NATO goes with it. Appropriate instruments for achieving this purpose are not lacking. Negotiations on Arms Control and troop withdrawals—talks on mutual balanced force reductions and cuts in conventional weapons are going on at present in Vienna—can be used to suggest that, if Russian troops are withdrawn beyond the Polish border, similar withdrawals should be expected from the West. With non-Communist governments installed in Eastern Europe, relations between the Soviet Union and its neighbouring states no longer depend on the continued stationing of the Red Army on their soil. It thus becomes possible for Mr Gorbachov to pursue a far bolder and more subtle policy on balanced troop withdrawals, setting a pace which the United States will have to match.

THESE POSSIBILITIES will have their effect on the German problem. Already voices are being heard in the Federal Republic calling for foreign troops to leave German soil, and the pacifist mood of public opinion in West Germany is making that country a difficult terrain for NATO forces. Mutual troop withdrawals, if carried to their logical conclusion, would lead to the effective neutralisation of both Germanies. But this seems to be the necessary condition of German reunification. An "Austrian type" solution is the most likely outcome of the German problem. In fact, everyone knows that some agreement on German reunification must be reached. The uncertainty is in the timing and the terms on which the Soviet Union will consent to it. But a decision will not wait too long, for the present situation is one of great instability. It is hard to see how two German states, one with a high-wage economy, the other with low standards of living, can live alongside each other with open frontiers, without a gradual seepage of working population from East to West. Moreover, West and East German political parties would be almost bound to establish links which, over time, would amount in practice to fusion.

The only realistic solution for this instability would be reunification, presumably preceded by a German peace treaty. If the neutralisation of Germany is, as seems likely, the price which Mr Gorbachov sets, then Britain, France and the United States will have to accept it. For the decision will be one for the Germans themselves. Within both West and East Germany compelling forces are working in favour of reunification. In effect, Soviet diplomacy has offered the bait of German unity as a lever to bring about changes in NATO which correspond to the running down of the Warsaw Pact. The confused reaction this has excited in the West German public and its politicians shows just how alluring this prospect is.

Thus it is possible to imagine that Mr Gorbachov's "common European home" would contain a neutral and united Germany, whose attention would be largely directed towards its political and economic relations with Eastern Europe. Such a Germany could provide the financial and technological assistance needed to produce some tangible results for *perestroika* and thereby ease political pressure on Gorbachov at home. It would develop a "special" relationship with the Soviet Union and take advantage of its geograpical and historical position to find new markets in Eastern Europe for its heavy industry.

Of course, Germany would continue to belong to the European Community, but German reunification and preoccupation with Eastern Europe would not leave the Community unchanged. Some East European countries—Hungary, Poland—are already beginning to express their wish to become fully-fledged member-states. The Brussels view is that any such enlargement should be warded off or, at any rate, delayed to some unspecified future. Indeed, resistance by the European Commission to Austria's candidacy is due to the fear that this might open the way to Hungary and other East European states.[1]

Here, however, the European Community may be the victim of its own ideology. Convinced "Europeans" have always seen it as a symbolic as well as a practical body, and it is precisely that symbolic sense of being once more European that the East Europeans seek. Their wishes can hardly be ignored or rebuffed without the European Community undermining its own claim to embrace the whole of Europe. In fact, new accessions to the Community may well go through in a fervent spirit of European reconcilation.

But this too can be seen as serving the purposes of Mr Gorbachov's diplomacy. A European Community which contained a reunified and neutralised Germany as well as some East European member-states would no longer be a credible nucleus of a West European political union. Its function would be to provide a forum for the mediation of East-West conflict and the binding together of a divided continent. It would, in fact, furnish a suitable framework for the establishment of "the common European home". If Benelux and Denmark were to join Germany in choosing neutrality, then the community might find itself with a ma-

[1] The most likely candidates for entry are Czechoslovakia, once it follows other states into non-Communist and democratic government, and Hungary. Poland's economic crisis will make it an implausible candidate for some time to come.

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jority of neutral states. Such a development would leave Britain and France (and possibly Spain and Italy) clinging to each other and to the United States. The last American bases in Europe would be on British, French or Spanish soil. On this hypothesis we are entering the post-NATO era.

In the light of such speculations the desire of François Mitterrand and Jacques Delors to speed up the pace of integration within the existing Community is understandable—of all countries France would find itself in the most difficult position after German reunification—but also irrelevant. The problem of German reunification is already posed. It is a more important issue than the Community's 1992 programme and will almost certainly have to be resolved before this is completed. Nor does it seem likely that attempts to "bind" West Germany to the West through the institutional development of the Community will succeed. A German leader like Hans-Dietrich Genscher, who has been remarkably accurate in his perception of the course of events in Eastern Europe, sees no contradiction between his *Ostpolitik* and membership of the Community. Rather he would view Germany as the link which could help to bring about reconciliation and peaceful relations between Eastern and Western Europe. Germany would resume the Bismarckian role of "honest broker" between East and West. Only there would be greater change of emphasis than Herr Genscher states publicly. For it is probable that the fresh and exciting possibilities opening up in Eastern Europe would engage the attention of the German public and government more closely than the familiar slow rhythm of negotiations in Brussels.

THE POSSIBILITY of a common foreign policy among the member-states of the European Community was created by the existence of a threat from the Soviet Union and, to a lesser degree, by a desire to correct the imbalance of power between the United States and its European allies. These considerations masked the differences and divergences between the states of Western Europe. The disappearance of the Russian menace as a predominant factor in the consciousness of Western European public opinion will allow these to emerge. Thus the kind of Europe that is likely to result from the present changes will display less cohesion in matters of foreign and security policy. Disagreements, clashes of interest even, may well develop between the countries which are at present members of the European Community. This can be seen already in the impending split between France and West Germany over the German crisis. Whether one agrees with it or not, Mrs Thatcher's view of the European future now appears far more plausible than it did six months ago. For, as a matter of fact rather than preference, when the new Europe is unveiled, it will hardly correspond to the homogeneous, tightly-knit model of political union derived from the Treaty of Rome.

It is now possible to see just why Mr Gorbachov's new European policy has taken the form of an ostentatious dismantling of Russian imperialism and unexpected concessions to the Western form of liberal democracy. It is also possible to speculate with some assurance on what he stands to gain from the construction of "a common European home". He is defusing an explosive political situation in Eastern Europe as well as transferring to the West the economic burden of the Soviet Union's satellite states. The new freedom of manoeuvre this will give him in Arms Control and troop withdrawal negotiations with the United States will enable him to make a start on the dismantling of the two military blocs in Europe, which, in turn, will allow him to reduce the Soviet Union's expenditure of manpower and resources on armaments, and release men and money for the improvement of Russia's economy. A central part of this process will be the neutralisation of Germany as a condition of reunification and help from its vast industrial power to rebuild Russian industry and produce some concrete results from *perestroika*. Finally, he will have pre-empted the rise of a Western European political union—something that any Russian government is bound to regard with suspicion.

Taken together, such results would represent a lessening in intensity of Soviet relations with the countries of Eastern Europe, but, at the same time, an extension of diplomatic influence in Europe as a whole. Just because Hungary and Poland—and tomorrow East Germany—are allowed to have free elections and non-Communist governments, it becomes possible for Moscow to have normal relations with Britain and France. The piercing of the Berlin Wall will increase Mr Gorbachov's reputation and political influence in West Germany. The new policy removes from the Soviet Union its detailed control of events in Eastern Europe, but it permits the use of a more flexible and attractive diplomacy to the West of the Elbe. Out of Russian weakness and an uneasy domination of Eastern Europe a policy has been constructed which is designed to appeal to that desire for peace and European reconciliation which exists at the back of the minds of most Europeans. Mr Gorbachov's policy brings such secret hopes up to the level of consciousness; that is why his phrase "a common European home" has had so much resonance in public opinion. He has had sense enough to realise that no such home can be constructed if a number of its inhabitants are to remain locked up in the attic. A potentially enormous diplomatic success has been created out of the very factors—military and economic weakness—which are driving the Soviet Union to reform, but which can also make it appear less threatening to its neighbours.

If this is a fair summary of the objectives and potentialities of Mr Gorbachov's new European policy, what should be the Western reaction to it? At present the United States and its allies are in the position of men who have pushed hard at the door and find it suddenly open before them. They are off-balance and have lost the diplomatic initiative. The confusion into which they have fallen can be seen at its most obscure in the reaction to events in Berlin. In defiance of political logic and everything we know about the history of nationalism, we are told that neither East nor West Germans want reunification—only to find, a few days later, that demonstrators in Leipzig are demanding "One Germany". Foreign Offices stoutly maintain that German reunification is "not on the agenda", yet all the time politicians are acting more and more as though it were (why else the present ferment within the European Community?). Martin Bangemann, an EEC Commissioner and a leader of West Germany's Free Democrat Party (*FDP*), maintains that what

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has happened will make no difference to Germany's European commitment, but then immediately demands a special trade agreement for East Germany and warns that Germany should not be forced to choose between Europe and German unity. There is no end to the contradictions and obfuscation, as men accustomed to move at tortoise pace find that history is up and running like a hare. And it is no comfort to be assured by the philosophers that the tortoise is bound to catch up!

Questions are now posed to Britain, France and the United States as well as to West Germany. The United States, in particular, seems to be at a turning-point in its foreign policy. Already there have been noises from Washington indicating that American concentration on European affairs was diminishing (e.g., in the Iklé report). The commitments of the United States in Latin America seem likely to increase, as the situation in Central America worsens and the attention of Americans is directed southwards, not merely by a desire to uphold the Monroe Doctrine, but also by a determination to stop the drug traffic across the Rio Grande. Congress is calling for troop cuts in Europe. Now Mr Gorbachov seems to be pointing the way for a relatively painless diminution of American responsibilities. Economically, present-day America seems more impressed by the importance of the Pacific rim countries than by that of Europe. To oppose "an evil empire" is one thing. To reject the new vision of Europe put forward by a Russian leader who is busy dismantling that empire is quite another. What price "evil empire" now?[2]

Britain, for its part, will also have to revise its policies. The implicit conflict between its membership of the European Community and its attraction towards the United States and the Atlantic has hitherto been concealed by the existence of the North Atlantic Alliance and the possibility of regarding the Community as the economic infrastructure of a European security system. Were America to take up a more distant relationship to Europe—say, that of a trans-atlantic guarantor of a German peace treaty and post-War settlement in Central Europe—then it is likely that "the special relationship" with the United States might come to characterise British foreign policy more strongly than the present rather formal consultations now do. With Germany neutralised, Britain could become what it has been before: Washington's main interlocutor in Western Europe. In this there would be a parallel to Germany's "special" position *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union. In any case, it must be the major preoccupation of British foreign policy to try to keep an American presence in Europe.

French foreign policy in the past has had as its central pillar a relationship with West Germany marked by a mixture of suspicion and patronage. Now, not only has German foreign policy recovered its freedom of action, but a reunited Germany risks becoming the dominant state within the European Community. President Mitterrand has responded to this potential threat to France's position by trying to speed up the pace of European integration. But, with German reunification on the horizon, it may well be too late for increased economic unity in the Community to have much effect on Bonn's foreign policy. It is difficult to see what Economic and Monetary Union could do to prevent Germany and the Soviet Union striking a bargain of the kind described above.

The European Community is for the moment—and perhaps will be in the foreseeable future—incapable of forming a bloc which, in matters of foreign policy and security, can act as a counterweight in Europe to the Soviet Union. And the paradox is that the collapse of the Warsaw Pact is bound to lead to the transformation of the Atlantic Alliance. Neither in the United States nor in Europe will public opinion accept the continuance of high military expenditure and the stationing of large numbers of troops in Western Europe, if, increasingly, this seems to be unnecessary.

Yet, for all the pressure the new situation has brought to bear on established habits and institutions, those in the West who remain fearful of what may happen with the dislimning of a familiar political landscape, should not forget that Western democracy has gained a huge victory. Even two or three years ago, we should never have dared to hope for what has happened—the Wall down, free elections in Poland and Hungary, a new Prague "Spring". Inconvenience, disorientation even—these are a small price to pay.

Now the West has to make up its collective mind as to how to react to what has happened. To begin with, it might serve the interests of reason and clarity if we were all to agree that the reunification of Germany is inevitable, and that the timing and price of this will be decided by the two Germanies and the Soviet Union. Of course, the Western occupying powers—Britain, France and the United States—will have to be consulted. Their legal assent to any change would be required, but it is hard to see how they could refuse anything that had already been accepted by German leaders. Naturally, Western leaders have their own security requirements which they would wish to see embodied in any Central European settlement. The best way for them to secure these (and their only means of seizing the political initiative) would be to suggest to Mr Gorbachov the negotiation of a German Peace Treaty. In what Michael Howard has called "a new Congress of Vienna" they could then modify, if not halt, the course of events. At present, Mr Gorbachov has made the running in the construction of a new Europe. The West must now determine to be present at this creation. At the conference table Western negotiators can write into the treaty the safeguards they need, the most important of which will be the continued presence of American forces somewhere in Europe. Otherwise Western leaders will be swept along by the stream of history which Mr Gorbachov has released, but is not perhaps quite able to control. If change cannot be stopped or slowed down, then it must be espoused. Russia's leadership seems to have learned that lesson, and the success of its diplomacy is above all due to this new willingness to come to terms with reality.

[2] However, it should not be forgotten that the move to new policies in the Soviet Union was partly brought about by the pressure exerted by President Reagan through the Star Wars programme and support for the Afghan Mujaheddin.

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Of course, there is the danger that Mr Gorbachov himself may be swept away by a conservative reaction in the Soviet Union. "Hard-liners" like Mr Ligachev and possibly some military men could take advantage of the failure of *perestroika* to improve Russia's economy, the revival of nationalism among the peoples of the Soviet Union, and the surrender of its Western glacis to overthrow a leader who has moved far away from the traditional pieties of Communism. None the less, many of those in high places in Moscow must be conscious that such a move would do nothing to solve the Soviet Union's problems. The orthodox approach to the economy has already been tried and failed, and neither within Russia itself nor in Eastern Europe can the lid be put back on the ferment that has been excited. Attempts to use the Red Army and the *KGB* to reimpose the old régime would not only deprive the Soviet Union of all the advantages won by Mr Gorbachov's diplomacy, but would also subject it once again to the strains of a losing race in armaments with the United States. By letting the dominoes fall in Eastern Europe a situation has been created which is irreversible except at the price of further internal collapse, a retreat into a crumbling fortress.

If the leaders of Western Europe wish to help Mr Gorbachov, let them now embark on a negotiation for a general settlement in Central Europe which, once concluded, would relieve the strain on Russia's economy and turn what is becoming a *fait accompli* into an international treaty. At the moment they have some time. There will have to be free elections in East Germany before anything else can be done. If East Germans are to decide their own future, they must have a genuinely representative government, whose decisions bear the hallmark of legitimacy. That time could be employed in the construction of a new system, appropriate in the wake of events that have left practically nothing in Europe unchanged.

Some would say that this respite should be used for the hardening and armouring of a European core Community which might hope later—very much later—to make its own impact on a wider Europe. The flaw in such reasoning is that the crisis is already here. Think what has happened in three years and what may happen in the two more before 1992. When Commission spokesmen talk of only accepting new member-states after 1995, they speak as if they had all the time in the world. But the shape of the new Europe will be settled before 1992. Not only will a battening down of hatches in Brussels do nothing to solve the German problem, it will also appear as a rejection of those East European states who feel themselves European in the full sense of the term and do not wish to wait until the end of the century before being given a say in the political instances of the European Community. To offer them European Free Trade Area status is a half a loaf; it does nothing to respond to their desire to end the division of Europe and is bound to be seen as relegation to a semi-colonial status.

If the West is to respond to Russia's new European policy by taking an initiative of its own, then its leaders can hardly wait to see what happens to Mr Gorbachov or to complete the proliferating legislation of the 1992 programme. To do so would allow the Soviet Union to dictate its own terms, as Communism collapses in East Germany and German opinion moves more and more decisively towards unification. To pre-empt the Russian offers, which are on the way, Western statesmen must be the first at the conference table. Only in this way can we get some idea of the plan and furnishings of "the common European home", who is to sit in the drawing-room and who is to toil in the kitchen.

"Russia", wrote Thomas Masaryk in the introduction to a brilliant and massive book, "is—Europe as well . . . . Russia does not differ essentially from Europe; but Russia is not yet essentially one with Europe."[3] Perhaps the coming settlement in Europe will also be for Europeans the discovery of a Russia whose nature and evolution have been concealed for seventy years by a smothering depotism. The use of the phrase "common European home" by Mr Gorbachov arouses suspicion in some Europeans, fears that this may be a means of diverting them from their own enterprises or subordinating them to the purposes of the Soviet Union. But, in the internal Russian debate between "Easterners" and "Westerners", the present Soviet leader does appear to belong to the latter camp. No doubt, he sees the Soviet Union as having *interests* in Europe, but there is no sign of the moral disapproval and gloomy paranoia with which Western countries were so often regarded by the heirs of the Orthodox tradition.

If this is so, then the present crisis in the Soviet Union and its need for economic and technological aid from the West offer an opportunity for a European settlement. However, the transition from well-tried and agreeably familiar political arrangements to what is bound to be at first an experiment, whose consequences cannot be wholly foreseen, is always a nervous business. The West was comfortable with NATO, the Warsaw Pact, even a divided Germany—so comfortable, indeed, that it was lulled into believing, wrongly as it turned out, that Germans were equally contented with the division of their country. None the less, comfort is not the main—not even a major—criterion by which an international system is to be judged. Freedom and justice weigh in the scales too. If the price of spreading these benefits to Eastern Europe is inconvenience and anxiety for Western governments, then we are bound to pay it.

The phrase "a common European home" seems to imply, in the mind of its inventor, a closer connection between Russia and the body of Europe. But, on the Western side, could it not also mean making a start on the Europeanisation of Russia, which so many observers have seen as the solution to that country's problems? Are we not at a moment of history when Russia might become, in Masaryk's words, "one with Europe"? If so, we owe it to ourselves to explore the possibilities with caution and prudence, as both President Bush and Margaret Thatcher have suggested, but also without fear and with some sense of the historic consequences of what has happened. The idea of a "common European home" is, as the Foreign Offices say, "on the agenda". We must try to discover what it would be like.

[3] Thomas Garrigue Masaryk, *The Spirit of Russia* (1955), p.6.

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Shūsaku Endō

Adieu

WHEN I BOARDED the bullet train bound for Kyoto, I noticed an elderly couple seated across the aisle from me. At Tokyo Station, a woman who might have been their daughter had come with her children to see the elderly couple off. When the train began to move, the two older people energetically waved their hands at their grandchildren, but once the platform had disappeared into the distance, they sat unmoving and silent in their seats.

The two scarcely spoke during the three-hour ride to Kyoto. The husband, who wore glasses, read a newspaper; as the train approached Shizuoka, the woman poured some tea from a thermos into a paper cup and handed it to her husband. Without a word he took the cup, slowly savoured two or three swallows, then passed it back to her. She spent a considerable amount of time finishing off the tea he had left. Ah, I thought, this is what an old married couple is like.

The train emerged from a long tunnel, and when the black roof-tiles of Kyoto came into view, the couple got up from their seats. The husband removed a suitcase from the overhead baggage-rack, and his wife walked toward the exit door carrying a paper bag full of souvenirs. I picked up my brief-case, and as I queued up behind them at the exit, without really trying to eavesdrop I overheard the following conversation:

"When was it we visited the Fushimi Inari Shrine?"
"Fifteen years—no, was it twenty years ago?"
"Twenty years? Can it have been that long?"

I have a memory of elderly people, the sort of memory that causes me, each time I recall it, to feel how peculiar human beings are.

In the summer of my second year in Lyon as a foreign student, I moved out of the college dormitory I had been staying in and went looking for a room where I could live on my own. Clutching an address provided by the student-affairs office, I called at a shabby building on an alley not far from the rue de Plat where the dorm was.

There was no elevator, and by the time I had climbed the stairs to the fourth floor I was out of breath. Some time in the spring I had developed a nasty cough, and I constantly felt exhausted, as though a lead weight had been strapped to my back. I rang the bell, and after some time the door, which was secured with a chain, was opened, and an elderly woman with worried eyes peeped furtively through the crack. I told her I would like to see the room, and she finally unfastened the chain.

A foul stench assailed me the moment I stepped into the room. It was not the smell of food, but something like mildew. The old woman questioned me briefly about my nationality and what I was doing in France, and when I told her I was a student at Lyon University, she showed me to the room they had to let.

It had a large bed, an old clothes dresser, a desk and a chair. The window, facing the summer's setting sun, looked out on the alley; at a window across the street a young man in his undershirt was playing an harmonica that he held in one hand. I heard footsteps, and when I turned around, the woman, who had her eyes fixed on me, had been joined by a bald, red-faced old man who leaned on a cane, perhaps because of a bad leg. It was evident at one glance that they were man and wife.

The husband, in a voice that seemed to demand a look of gratitude from me, announced that there were no other houses these days that would rent a room this fine at so low a price. With deliberate forethought he muttered, as if to himself, that they had no need to rent out a room but had finally decided, at the request of the student-affairs office of the university, to make the room available. He struck me as the crafty, miserly sort of fellow common in Lyon, but I had to admit that the rent was cheap.

I ended up renting the room. Three days later, I panted and sweated my way up those stairs to the fourth floor, dragging a heavy trunk, and then made several other trips back and forth between the dormitory and their house. By the time I had finished transporting all my belongings, I was so tired I could hardly speak, and I collapsed on to the large bed in the centre of the room. As my weight came down on it, the old bed gave out a lethargic creak.

I can still remember how blisteringly hot that summer was in Lyon. On my way to college, as I crossed a bridge over the Saône River, painful darts of sunlight rebounded into my eyes from the surface of the murky, oil-black water and from the boats moored to its shores. Just looking at the glaring reflections was enough to exhaust me. I realised that I was weary to my very core.

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Each time I recall the summer I lived in that house, the first things that come to mind are the sound of the radio the old husband always kept on, and that strange smell. A dank, mouldy smell like old bundles of paper. No sooner had I stepped through the door than it came faintly but quickly to my nose. My room was off to the right of the doorway, separate from the tiny kitchen and bedroom of the old couple; the smell seemed to come from their living area. If there is such a phrase as "the smell of old age", then that was what it was. It was an odour built up over many long years, as the breath they exhaled and the smells of their bodies mingled with the food they ate. The incense-like smell of human bodies that no longer emitted the sweat of youth. That smell had seeped into all the walls and floors and even the dilapidated furniture of this house.

I made every effort to live there unobtrusively, but I was still occasionally scolded by the hobbling old man. He would complain that I had forgotten to turn off the lights when I went out at night, or that I had awakened him when I closed the front door after returning home late. But if I bought him some bonbons or some *marrons glacés* from my meagre allowance, he would do an immediate about-face and become the most affable of souls.

The walls of their kitchen were decorated with several old photographs of the couple. From the yellow, faded photographs I learned that many years earlier they had managed a café in Algiers. In one picture, a thin woman with bobbed hair, wearing the kind of long skirt that was popular in old French movies, stood beside a sickly-looking girl in front of a shop with a sign reading "Café de la Paix". That was the old woman thirty years ago, along with their now-deceased daughter. In another, a plump man sat surrounded by customers, raising his glass happily with all the others. That was the old man. When he was in high spirits, he would collar me on my way back from the student cafeteria, and sipping on wine he would boast about the grand life the French had enjoyed in Algeria.

"They were a manageable people back then. But they're no good any more."

He was talking, of course, about the Algerians.

"We Frenchmen built hospitals for them, and taught them how to read and write, but now they're starting to forget what they owe us."

When I did not reply, he continued, "If we French hadn't gone there, they'd still be as sickly and destitute and miserable as they were in the old days."

At such times his wife, with sheepish sunken eyes, would wordlessly seize the bottle of wine from which he was drinking. She constantly complained that he drank too much. When his bottle was taken away, his face would fall in disappointment, and he would take out a soiled handkerchief and loudly blow his nose.

The old couple remained in the house the greater part of the day. The husband would fall asleep in his bedroom, either listening to his radio or reading the newspaper. With his bad leg, it must have been agonising for him to climb up and down the stairs to the fourth floor. The wife would go out to Mass on Sundays, and in the evenings she would go out shopping for food or to run errands, but she always came back quickly. On my way back from classes I would often run into her on one of her shopping trips. She wore black clothing, and, like me, she walked down the deserted alley with her back slightly bent. Once she told me she was on her way to mail a letter to her brother in Bordeaux. When I said, "*A tout à l'heure*", she gave me a quick, frightened look and replied, "*A tout à l'heure*".

SOMETIMES, complaining of a headache, the old man would sleep into the afternoon. I was grateful, if only because I didn't have to listen to his radio.

On those days, the old woman would invite me into her kitchen and make me coffee, but in exchange I had to listen patiently to her complaints. Her husband had not done any serious work since the time they lived in Algiers. She had had to cover for his gambling debts, and he refused to give up liquor even though his liver was damaged. She would harp on about his faults, all the while gazing with eyes moist as though after a crying spell at the photographs of their days in Algeria. Now and then I would chime in with a "*Tiens*" or a "*C'est vrai?*", but I was not the least bit interested or concerned.

"My husband can't do anything if I'm not around. He was that way years ago, and he's the same way now. If I were to die first, why, I have no idea what would become of him."

Her sunken eyes were fixed on one spot in space.

"But I'm getting old myself, and I can't always nurse him and look after him. . . ."

"He looks fairly strong physically, but does he have a weak constitution?"

"He used to be strong. But recently he gets these headaches like today, or has dizzy spells. It's because of his liver. He's never given up his drinking for even a day."

"Why haven't you taken him to a doctor?"

She shrugged her shoulders brusquely. "A doctor just soaks up money from people who aren't all that sick." With that, she hastily collected the coffee-cup I had emptied and left the kitchen.

At night not a sound could be heard along the alley. Often, lacking the desire to study or the energy to go out and call on friends, I would lie back on my bed, staring absently at the shadows on the ceiling. There in the silence, I would sometimes hear a car racing along in the distance. There in the silence, that smell seemed much stronger than in the daylight. Not a sound came from the couple's bedroom. I wondered if the old man and woman still slept in the same bed. I was certain the smell would be even more overpower-

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ing in their bedroom. I began to feel as if the incense-like smell had permeated my own body since I had moved into this room.

One night as I lay stretched out on my bed gazing at the ceiling, I heard soft whispers and a voice convulsed with sobs coming from the kitchen.

I listened intently. It was the old man whispering, and the weeping voice belonged to the old woman. My response was one of puzzlement: could it be that wives were still driven to tears after a couple had been together this long? Did people continue to cry even after they were old enough to know the futility of weeping over the vicissitudes of life? The thought filled me with sorrow. In the silence of the night, the sobbing seemed as if it would go on forever. I began to worry that the old woman might have taken ill. There was no one else in the house but this old couple and me, and I persuaded myself that I couldn't just ignore the situation.

When I knocked on the kitchen door, the moaning stopped. The old man opened the door and looked at me in embarrassment. The old woman had both hands over her face, and her shoulders quivered.

"It's nothing", the old man told me. "It's just an attack. She has them sometimes. Over our daughter who died. Crying doesn't do any good . . . it won't bring her back to life. . . ."

Still, he slowly stroked his wife's back. When her sobs subsided a bit, she wiped her eyes with a corner of her handkerchief and said, "Bernard, I'm sorry."

"Is your daughter the child in those pictures?" I took another look at the old photograph of the young girl in a school uniform standing beside her mother in Algeria. The slender girl with bobbed hair squinted in the bright African sun. She looked perhaps seven or eight years old.

"Yes. She died of a fever. My wife wore herself out caring for the girl, and lost all will to live, and I thought maybe if I brought her back to Lyon. . . ."

"No, she's lucky to have died so young." She shook her head firmly. "She was so sickly, if we'd died first there would have been no one to look after her. . . ."

After I went back to my room, I continued to hear the muffled conversation of the old couple from the kitchen.

It isn't, however, such trivial incidents that I remember about the old couple. It's something quite different. The old man was still tormented by severe headaches around the time my summer vacation ended. He would bury his head in both hands and even give out muffled moans. On my way to school one day, I said to the old woman, "I really think you ought to call a doctor."

"Yes, yes." She shrugged her shoulders. "He gets these headaches because he drinks too much, even though I tell him not to."

She never said whether she would call a doctor or not. Just as in Japan, there were many older people in France who disliked doctors, so there was nothing further I could or did say to her.

When I came back in the afternoon, his headache had not gone away. The old woman made him some herbal tea, but of course it had no effect on his condition. When I repeated my suggestion with more insistence, she finally agreed with much reluctance to summon a doctor. I went to a nearby clinic with the message.

Before long, a young man carrying a black satchel arrived. He disappeared into the old man's bedroom, and for a long while he examined the patient. He asked the old woman for a cup to take a urine sample.

On his way out, the doctor pushed up his glasses and said to me at the door, "I'll write out a prescription for him. Pick it up at the pharmacy later."

I asked him what was wrong with the old man.

"His blood pressure is very high . . . and his kidneys are in terrible shape."

I was able to guess at the meaning of "blood pressure", but at that time I didn't know the French word for "kidney". I had him write the word on a piece of paper, and later I looked it up in a dictionary.

"He'll have to watch what he eats. He should avoid anything greasy or spicy, and cut down on pepper and salt. If he doesn't, he'll continue to have these headaches, and eventually it'll kill him."

"Kill him?"

"The blood-vessels in his brain will burst."

"Did you tell all of this to Madame?"

"Naturally."

He repeated his instructions to me to pick up the prescription at the pharmacy, and then with his black satchel flapping against his leg, he went down the stairs.

I took the prescription to the appointed pharmacy, and brought back bottles of white and blue pills that I handed over to the old woman. He was to take the round white pills before breakfast; the blue medication he was to have without fail after every meal.

Comforted perhaps by the doctor's visit, the old man's headache seemed to have abated the following day. Throughout the day he listened to the radio, read the newspaper, and paced around the house with his cane like an animal in a cage.

But from that day, I slowly became aware of something peculiar. The odour that had filled the house like a layer of invisible dust changed. Each time I returned to the house and opened the door, my nose was greeted by the smells of lard and cooking-oil. I had no idea what the old couple had eaten up until that time, but I do know that I had never smelled the odour of lard as strongly. With the restrained sort of life they led, I'm sure their daily fare consisted of rather bland foods.

At first I thought nothing of the change. But I had grown so accustomed to the mouldy smell of their bodies in the time I had lived with them that the abrupt change struck me as curious.

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In the kitchen one day, I said to the old man as he read his newspaper, "Does it smell sort of oily in here to you?"

His wife, who was knitting in a chair beside him, sternly responded for him. "My husband has a bad liver. He has to have proper nourishment."

"The doctor said he shouldn't eat anything too irritating. . . ."

"Yes. I'm very careful about that. I don't let him drink wine any more. There's nothing as irritating as alcohol."

Her voice was uncommonly overpowering, so I said nothing further. It wasn't as if I was their son, or even a member of their family. I was merely a boarder. I didn't want to stick my nose in where it didn't belong.

THE SMELLS of lard and cooking-oil hovered indistinctly in every corner of the house after that. I recognised the error in the old man's dietary treatment, but I couldn't bring myself to reprimand his wife for her ignorance. Elderly people always think that their own way of doing things is correct.

And so for some time I attributed it all to her stupidity. But I wonder if her lack of knowledge was really to blame.

I can still remember that Sunday in October. It was a bright autumn day, and when I opened my window, laughing children were playing on the stone-paved alley strewn with fallen yellow leaves. The chimes of the church announcing Mass echoed from the distance. The old woman set out for Mass, while her husband and I remained in the house.

There was a sudden groan of pain from the kitchen. I rushed in to find the old man with his elbows pressed on to the table, clutching his head between his fists.

"The pain has come again. That horrible pain."

His face was flushed red, and the blue veins pulsated through the few strands of white hair left on his nearly-bald head. In front of him was a glass with traces of something the colour of lipstick. I knew in a moment that he had downed a glass of cooking wine while his wife was out of the house. "I'll be all right in a minute." He forced his lips into an embarrassed smile. "But would you put away this bottle of wine? Into the cupboard. If not, she'll find me out."

I picked up the bottle and opened the cupboard. Next to the olive oil and ketchup I noticed two smaller bottles. Bottles that I had seen before. They were filled with white pills and blue pills. The ones the doctor had instructed me to pick up at the pharmacy. Not one pill was missing. The old woman had not given any of them to her husband.

I can't properly describe how I felt at that moment. With the sort of horror a child experiences when it has its first glimpse of some ghastly insect, I stood at the open cupboard, staring vacantly at the medicine bottles.

"What's wrong? Just put it in there." His instructions brought me out of my reverie.

Eventually his wife returned. Dressed in black and carrying a handbag, she saw her ailing husband from the doorway and cried out in a quavering voice, "Bernard!"

After he had fallen asleep in his bedroom, the old woman, with moist eyes, came to my room and complained, "While I was gone he drank some wine. Yes, I know all about it. No matter how often I tell him to stop, he won't listen to me. He's always been that way. He can't get along without me. I can't imagine what would happen to him if I died first."

As I listened to her lamentations, I suddenly thought of the two pill bottles in the cupboard. I had no idea why she had not given her husband his medicine. She had no reason to detest the old man. I had seen her caring for him each day, and I couldn't believe that there was anything false in her tears as she muttered her complaints. And yet she had fed her husband the oily foods his doctor had prohibited, and she had made no attempt to give him his medication. Her behaviour seemed calculated to bring her husband one step closer to death each day.

TOWARD THE END of autumn, I moved to different lodgings. The new house was owned by a couple who taught at primary school. The day I moved from the old couple's room, the old man remained in bed with a headache and numbness in his hands and feet. At the doorway the old woman held her hand out to me. When I took it in mine, she gazed at me with those worried eyes and whispered, "Adieu". I wondered whether I should take her meaning as "farewell", or as literally signifying "in the next world". I lowered my head in silence and went down the stairs.

Translated from the Japanese by Van C. Gessel

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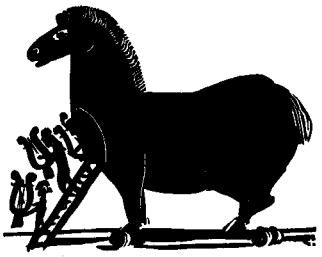
Alan H. Sommerstein

Learning from the Greeks

On Human Nature, War & Intellectual Inquiry



"I WILL BE CONTENT", wrote Thucydides in the 5th century B.C., in the prologue to his history of the Peloponnesian War, "if my work is judged useful by any who hereafter wish to learn the truth of the events which happened and something quite similar to which, in all human probability, will one day happen again."[1] It is fairly safe to assume that when Thucydides made that prophecy, the future conflicts which he envisaged would, like that war, be primarily waged among the leading powers in the world of small Greek city-states within which his life was set.

For all his intellectual self-assurance, Thucydides could hardly have imagined that nearly 24 centuries after his death his history would be a fundamental text for students of the art of statesmanship (or, as we would call it now, political science) in countries of which he had never heard; or that his analysis of the causes of the war between Athens (voting population 40,000) and Sparta (voting population perhaps 4,000) would be fruitfully applied[2] to wars between states a thousand times as populous and ten thousand times as wealthy, equipped with technologies which even the lively imagination of his contemporary, Aristophanes, could hardly have conceived as comic fantasies. Although Aristophanes sometimes comes quite near, as when in *Frogs* Euripides is made to propose the following scheme of aerial chemical warfare for ensuring Athenian superiority at sea:

> "Tie thin Cinesias across fat Cleocritus's back to make a pair of wings, and launch them into the air over the waters of the sea . . . . They would be armed with cruets full of vinegar, which they would shower into the enemy's eyes during naval battles".[3]

And yet, although there are certainly vast differences between ancient Greek society and our own, there are nevertheless also similarities that enable us still to learn much from their experience.

The profoundest of these is also the simplest: that both societies are composed of human beings, and human beings have not changed in any essential respect. There is no sign that we have evolved significantly in a biological sense in the last two-and-a-half millennia, or that our physical and emotional needs, and the demands and strivings of what we call human nature and Thucydides called "that which is human" (*to anthrôpinon*) have altered to any appreciable extent.[4] In our own century we have repeatedly seen gigantic efforts made with all the apparatus of a modern state to remodel those demands and strivings by repression or education or both, and to create a New Man fit to live in an ideal, planned, rational society. These efforts, in which oceans of blood were shed, have been catastrophic failures, as the heirs of those who made them now admit. One cannot help observing that Thucydides and Aristotle could have told them as much from the start, and even Plato would probably have admitted it before the end.

THUS ARISTOTLE, in book II of *The Politics*, several times criticises the communism of Plato's *Republic* and the egalitarianism of Phaleas of Chalcedon as running counter to human nature. The following quotations are representative:

> "There are two impulses which more than all others cause human beings to cherish and feel affection for each other: 'this is my own' and 'this is a delight'. Among people organised [as proposed in the *Republic*] no one would be able to say either."

> "It is surely no accident that every man has affection for himself: nature meant this to be so."

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[1] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, book I, ch. 22, section 4.

[2] See Michael Howard, *The Causes of Wars and Other Essays* (1983), pp. 7-22.

[3] Aristophanes, *Frogs*, lines 1,437-41.

[4] On the essential constancy and biological underpinning of "human nature", see Edward O. Wilson, *Sociobiology: The New Synthesis* (1975), in particular pp. 547-75, and *On Human Nature* (1978); and P. L. van den Berghe, *Human Family Systems: An Evolutionary View* (1979).

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> "Phaleas holds that equality of possessions, by ensuring that no one will resort to stealing because he is cold or hungry, is a sufficient cure for crimes. But to secure the necessities of life is not the only purpose for which men turn criminal . . . . For there is no natural limit to wants and most people spend their lives trying to satisfy them."

And Plato in *The Laws*, his last major work, while he still maintained that the type of society described in the *Republic*, with wives, children and all property held in common, was "the first and best", doubted whether such a society existed or could exist unless it was peopled by "gods or children of gods". This should be read in conjunction with an earlier passage, where the main speaker in the dialogue says:

> ". . . we are speaking to humans and not to gods; now the things that are most of all human by nature are pleasures, pains and desires, on which every mortal creature unavoidably and absolutely hangs, as it were, and depends."

Accordingly, in the society designed in *The Laws,* and said to be as close to that of the *Republic* as is practically possible, private property, marriage, and the family are reinstated.[5]

DIFFERENT AREAS of human life are affected to different extents by technological change. The area which is perhaps affected least (whatever Marx may have thought) is that of politics, and especially inter-state politics; that is why the analyses of Thucydides in particular are so readily applicable to modern situations. It is as true as it ever was that the main causes of international conflicts are, in words ascribed by Thucydides to an anonymous Athenian spokesman, "the three greatest forces—prestige, fear, and material benefit", and that the most powerful of these is fear.

> "Events themselves compelled us to advance to our present position of imperial power, principally because of fear, secondly also of prestige, and afterwards of material benefit too; and then it seemed too dangerous . . . to take the risk of letting that position go."

It was no different on the other side:

> ". . . in my opinion the truest cause [of the Peloponnesian War] . . . was that the aggrandisement of Athens made the Spartans afraid and compelled them to go to war."[6]

In our century, World War I largely came about because Germany was afraid of being eclipsed by the growing power of Russia.[7] World War II broke out when it did because Britain and France had became convinced that Hitler's ambitions were unlimited, and feared the consequences of leaving him unopposed even though they had no clear idea how to stop him. The cold war—which in any previous era would have become a real war within a year or two—was fuelled by fears inspired in one half of Europe by the forcible Stalinisation of the other half.

EXACTLY THE same principle is exemplified in the tragic conflict called the *intifada,* in which Israelis are daily sacrificing both their reputation in the eyes of the world, and the very considerable material benefits that peace with the Arab nations could bring them, because a majority of them remain convinced that the Palestine Liberation Organisation and at least some important Arab states desire, and are continuing to work for, the destruction of Israel. This is strikingly evidenced by an opinion poll, taken in February 1989, which showed that a majority of Israelis were in favour of entering a dialogue with the PLO provided it recognised Israel and renounced terrorism—two months after the PLO, in the opinion of most of the rest of the world, had done just that.

Israelis know that politicians can lie. They know that the Palestine National Covenant envisages an Arab Palestine state covering the whole territory between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, in which Jews would not be citizens unless they were "of Palestinian origin", whatever that may mean. They know that the Covenant has not been repealed or amended, and that neither Yassir Arafat nor anyone else except the Palestine National Council by a two-thirds majority has the power to declare any part of it obsolete or inoperative. They remember that at the one moment in the last 40 years when "the liberation of Palestine" seemed imminent, the then Chairman of the PLO, Ahmed Shukairy, predicted that none of the Israeli Jews would survive it. They remember that their fathers and grandfathers ignored or disbelieved a similar prophecy made by a European head of state about European Jews on 30 January 1939. And the world wonders why they do not take Arafat at his word.[8]

Israeli fears may or may not be justified; the fact is that they exist, and that if peace in the area depends (as perhaps it does) on the creation (for the first time in the whole history of the Middle East) of an independent Palestinian Arab state, then peace will not come until Arafat or his successor convinces Israelis, as Anwar Sadat convinced them in regard to Egypt, that these fears are groundless.

IN THE SAME WAY, the tremendous decrease in East-West tension in the last few years has been due not to a reduction in armaments (that, to the extent that is has happened or will happen, is a result rather than a cause) but to a reduction in fear—the fear of each of the superpowers that it may become the victim of predation by the other.

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[5] Quotations from: Aristotle, *The Politics* (tr. T. A. Sinclair, rev. T. J. Saunders, 1981), pp. 107-17, 129-131; Plato, *The Laws*, pp. 739b-d, 732e, 739e.

[6] Thucydides, *History of the Peloponnesian War*, book I, ch. 76, section 2; I,75, 3-4; I,23, 6 (repeated in essentials in I 88).

[7] See Andreas Hillgruber, *Germany and the Two World Wars* (tr. W. C. Kirby, 1981), pp. 22-40, especially pp. 25 and 32 on Bethmann Hollweg's obsession with the "steady, dynamic growth of Russian power".

[8] On the February 1989 opinion poll see, e.g., *Financial Times*, 15 February 1989, p. 20; for the text of the Covenant see Walter Laqueur, ed., *The Israel-Arab Reader* (1970 edition), pp. 439-443; for Shukairy's prediction see, e.g., Patrick Seale, *The Washington Post*, 2 June 1967.

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THERE ARE OTHER ASPECTS, too, of international relations about which the ancient Greek world has much to teach us. The problems, for example, of alliances and confederations, particularly those in which (as was nearly always the case among the Greeks) one member was much more powerful than any of the others; or the question whether neighbouring states with similar social and political systems can coexist more easily than those with widely different systems, and whether some types of system are inherently incapable of such coexistence. The answer to this question, incidentally, seems to be no, at least as far as those systems known to Greeks are concerned—although they themselves didn't always see it that way. Both Spartans and Athenians at different times thought, in what would now be called "mirror-image" fashion, that their great rivals would inevitably seek to destroy their respective political systems; and they were both wrong.

The one kind of political system that *would* be incapable of coexisting peacefully with others would be one that was bound up with a religion or ideology that divided humanity into the children of light and the children of darkness, and imposed on the former a duty to spread "the truth" across the world—if necessary, by force.

Such ideologies hardly existed in pagan antiquity. For us they almost begin with the Jewish sect of the Essenes, founded in the mid 2nd century B.C., much of whose principal communal library survives as "the Dead Sea Scrolls"; but the Essenes' holy wars appear to have been fought on paper only. Christianity too was for long (until the end of the 11th century, in fact) saved from a holy-war ideology by its belief that the age of eschatological conflict would begin with the Second Coming, and by the failure of that event to occur.

In 1939 Nazism was a holy war ideology; Stalinism ("socialism in one country") was not; and, though Stalin at that date had thousands of times as much innocent blood on his hands as Hitler had, and though most of the British and French political élites hated Communism much more than they hated Fascism, it was against Hitler, not Stalin, that they went to war. Whether ideologies of that kind, religious or secular, exist in the world today is an empirical question.

SO FAR AS INSIGHT into human nature is concerned, the most profound and most precious source the ancient Greeks have left us is tragic poetry—a term in which, following Aristotle, I include Homer's *Iliad*.[9] It is sometimes felt that the mythological and religious background of Greek tragedy and epic—set as it is in a world of oracles and curses, fates and furies, and what the Bishop of Durham would call laser-beam divine interventions—makes it terribly remote ("alien" is a fashionable word) from anything that we today can readily understand. This is a strange attitude to take in a generation where one of the most flourishing and respected literary genres is that of science fiction, which regularly leads us into worlds in which the rules of existence are different from any that humans know or have ever known, and then—at its best—uses these strange worlds to throw light back on ours.

Nor is it only imaginative writers who stretch reality in this way. Philosophers do it too. It is a regular practice in modern ethical philosophy to test hypotheses by means of thought-experiments, by positing some fantastic situation that provides a crucial test for some proposed ethical principle. A famous example is a thought-experiment on the morality of abortion: the reader is invited to suppose that a famous violinist is dangerously ill, and is being treated by having his bloodsteam linked to the reader's kidneys for nine months, in such a way that if the link is cut off before the nine months are up, the reader will not be adversely affected but the violinist is bound to die.[10]

GREEK TRAGEDY, in one of its aspects, can be seen as a laboratory for thought-experiments of a not altogether dissimilar kind. For example: you and your brother are the leaders of a great armada, about to cross the seas with the object of reclaiming your brother's wife, whom a visiting foreign prince has abducted in violation of the sacred laws governing hospitality, and of taking well-deserved vengeance on him and his people. The fleet is prevented from sailing by adverse winds, and you are told by an infallible prophet that it never will be able to sail unless you bring your eldest daughter a hundred miles from her home and offer her up as a sacrifice. What should you do and why? That is, of course, the story of Agamemnon and Iphigeneia. In different treatments of the myth we find the conditions of the problem constantly being varied, in matters like the state of the troops (in Aeschylus's *Agamemnon* they are said to have been starving[11]), the possibility or otherwise of sending them home overland, the reliability of the prophet and the trust placed in him, the attitude of the men and their leaders to the proposed sacrifice (and especially of Menelaus, for whose sake the war was being launched), and several other factors.

Again: you are told, likewise by an infallible prophet, that a war which has lasted for ten years can be brought to a victorious conclusion only with the help of a particular weapon; but that weapon and its owner have throughout those ten years been on an island where the leaders of the army had left him, wounded, in great pain, and without any food or medical assistance except what he could procure for himself. Any of those leaders who now tries to approach him is sure to be shot on sight. You, however, a very young man who has only recently joined the army, will be able to win the man's confidence and then get hold of the weapon by a trick or when he is asleep. The whole army is counting on your doing this; only thus has it any hope of having anything to show for its decade of toil and suffering. The trouble is that,

[9] Aristotle, *Poetics,* pp. 1448b34-1449a2, 1459b7-16.

[10] The experiment was devised by J. J. Thomson, in "A Defense of Abortion", *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, vol. 1 (1971-72), pp. 47-66. It has been much criticised, defended, and refined in the subsequent literature, which is also full of other thought-experiments on the same topic.

[11] "When a delay in port that kept their stomachs empty pressed hard the host of the Achaeans . . . and the winds coming from the Strymon causing a cruel delay, bringing starvation . . . with wasting wore away the flower of the Argives." Aeschylus, *Agamemnon*, lines 188-98, in *Oresteia: Agamemnon* (tr. Hugh Lloyd-Jones, 2nd ed., 1979).

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by your heredity and your upbringing, you have an utter loathing of dishonourable deception. Should you swallow that loathing? And can you? That is the position of Neoptolemus, the son of Achilles, in Sophocles's *Philoctetes*; and again we can see, by comparison with our fragmentary information about earlier plays on the same theme whose texts have not survived, how the dramatist has varied the conditions of the problem—most notably by introducing the figure of Neoptolemus into a story in which he originally had no part, and by transforming the island of Lemnos (in Homer a flourishing kingdom ruled by a son of Jason the Argonaut[12]) into an uninhabited wilderness.

In both these cases, and in many others, while some of the causal factors that create the dilemma are of a mythical or supernatural character, the dilemma itself is thoroughly human, and timeless. These ethical aspects of Greek tragedy have recently been a subject of increasing interest, and have been found to illuminate, and be illuminated by, the analytical discussions of ethical issues in the works of Aristotle.[13]

IT IS NOT ONLY through its similarities and analogies with our own culture that the culture of the ancient Greeks has important things to say to us. We can learn from the differences too. Few of the features by which the two cultures differ are unique or anomalous peculiarities of Greek civilisation. Indeed—with, perhaps, the sole exception of slavery—the principal features of ancient Greek culture that are absent from ours are features which (or analogues of which) are widespread in large and important societies in various parts of the world today, including some of the cultures that have gone to make up the "multicultural nations" typical of the modern West. In some of the most striking of these features—such as the role of religion in society, or the rather rigid definition of the social status, rights and duties of men and women respectively—it is the dominant liberal culture of the Western world that is an anomalous exception when seen against the background of the whole range of human societies. Comparison of that culture with another, many of whose norms of behaviour were very different, immediately raises the question *why* they were different.

Why was it, for instance, that Greeks tended to despise those who failed to take vengeance for wrongs inflicted on them or on those close to them, when to a large proportion of modern Western minds (especially among the well-educated young) "revenge" has become a dirty word? It is no good assigning the credit, or the blame, to Christianity, which has often coexisted with a popular culture setting a very high value on revenge.

What Christianity certainly has done, so far as revenge is concerned, is to provide a handy, and quite misleading, vocabulary for talking about it. Over and over again, and often by people who should know better, revenge is damned with the clichés "an eye for an eye" and "Old Testament morality". In fact the Old Testament specifically forbids the taking of vengeance or even the harbouring of a grudge. The phrase "an eye for an eye" (the so-called *lex talionis*), wherever it is used, refers not to private revenge but to judicial punishment. And even as a judicial punishment this ancient Semitic custom, while it remained nominally valid and was duly reiterated in the various law-codes incorporated in the Pentateuch, had long been superseded in practice by the payment of material compensation. This is clearly shown by certain other provisions of the personal-injury laws. One such provision forbids the acceptance of material compensation for homicide—implying that such compensation might be accepted for lesser injuries; another lays down rules for assessing the compensation payable for assault, which is to cover loss of earnings and the cost of medical treatment.[14] A similar move away from literal retaliation took place in early Greece, where blood-vengeance for homicide gave place first to material compensation and later to trial and punishment by the state.

TO RETURN to return to the cultural contrasts between the Greeks and ourselves: why were ideas of ritual pollution and collective religious guilt so important to most Greeks that they were even sometimes capable of precipitating wars? The significance of this problem is obvious in a world in which, on the one hand, religion on the lips of its official Western spokesmen sometimes seems to be little more than liberal ethics in fancy dress; while, on the other hand, religion in the hearts of believers in various parts of the globe continues to fuel conflicts of peculiar stubbornness and intractability.

Why did virtually all Greeks, including quite explicitly their greatest philosophers, hold it to be self-evident, not only that all humans are not created equal, but also that they ought not be be treated as equals? For Plato, women were on average inferior to men in every sphere of activity, and "barbarians" (i.e. non-Greeks) were the natural enemies of Greeks, so that in fighting against them any brutality was permissible. For Aristotle, some humans are "slaves by nature" and are better off being owned by others; women are by nature inferior and subject to men; and both slaves and women are imperfect in their mental faculties. In contrast, an earlier thinker, Antiphon, asserted that "by nature we are all alike in every respect and capable of being either barbarians or Greeks".[15]

It is one thing to condemn, as we must, racism, sexism, and all the other such "isms" we can identify that designate unfair forms of group discrimination; but we shall not get far in eliminating them until we realise that in every generation before our own the vast majority of human beings practised

[12] Homer, *The Iliad*, book VII, lines 467-71.

[13] See for instance, M. C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (1986) and M. Whitlock Blundell, *Helping Friends and Harming Enemies* (1989).

[14] Vengeance and bearing grudges: *Leviticus*, ch. XIX, verse 18. Eye for eye: *Exodus*, XXI, 23-25, *Leviticus*, XXIV, 19-20, *Deuteronomy*, XIX, 21. No compensation for homicide: *Numbers*, XXXV, 31-32. Rules for assessing compensation: *Exodus*, XXI, 18-19.

[15] See Plato, *The Republic*, book V, pp. 455c-e, 469b-471b; G. Vlastos and M. R. Lefkowitz, *The Times Literary Supplement*, 17 March and 5 May 1989 respectively; Aristotle, *Politics* (tr. Sinclair and Saunders), pp. 68-9, 95; Antiphon in *The Oxyrhynchus Papyri*, nos 1,364, 3,647.

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all these "isms" without a qualm whenever they got the chance, and that there is more behind them than a series of evil conspiracies of the powerful against the powerless.

Although it is important to the understanding of the Greek world to seek answers to questions like these, it is perhaps even more important to the understanding of our own world to recognise that such questions can exist at all—that people of the highest standards of intelligence and morality have maintained opinions and principles which few "intellectuals" of the present day would fail to find absurd or wicked or both.

IN ONE RESPECT, at any rate, the present-day intellectual should be in full accord with the values of ancient Greek and especially of Athenian society: in the store he sets by freedom of inquiry, the importance he attaches to what the Greeks called *historia* (inquiry, questioning, investigation) and *parrêsia* (liberty of expression, literally the right to "say anything"). I say "should be" because in practice he too often is not. In recent years academics have been denied a hearing at conferences and seminars—I am not speaking now of student societies—for the offence of conducting research tending to show significant differences in the average values of certain psychological parameters for different ethnic groups; for suggesting that many of the worst features of Hitler's tyranny were modelled on the practice of Lenin and Stalin (an idea which today, at least in regard to Stalin, it is probably safer to float in the Soviet press than in a German lecture-room); or merely for being a citizen of South Africa—indeed, a British professor has been subjected to public humiliation for *visiting* that country without his Vice-Chancellor's permission.

It has long been a platitude that modern Western culture comes from a triple root—Roman, Greek and Israelite (though in a sense it might be fairer to think of these three less as roots than as highly vigorous grafts on a largely Germanic stock, grafts which have immensely increased the beauty, utility and value of the tree). Now, one can hardly imagine two cultures—at any rate two Mediterranean cultures—more utterly disparate than those of the ancient Jews and the Romans, whose mutual incomprehension gave rise to one of the great catastrophes of history (and thereby, indirectly, to Christianity and to rabbinic Judaism). But in one sense they were at one, and at one also with most other ancient societies.

In both there is a case for claiming that the prime social value, from the point of view of the ordinary individual, was that of obedience. For the Roman this meant obedience to constituted authority: to those who wielded the *imperium* that was so starkly symbolised by the *fasces*, with the axe in their midst. For the Jew, obedience meant obedience to God and his laws: the most sceptical, one might say cynical, ancient Jew whose writings we possess—the author of *Ecclesiastes*—ends by affirming that to fear God and keep his commandments is "the whole meaning of being human".[16] In the centuries that followed him, indeed, there was a vast flowering of intellectual activity in the endeavour to determine the precise implications of the commandments in every aspect of human life, but the rightness and divine origin of the commandments themselves continued (and continue, in the "orthodox" tradition) to be beyond question.

There are Greek texts too in which a high value is set on obedience. Here is one of them.

> "Whoever transgresses, violating the laws or taking it into his head to give orders to his rulers, that man can win no praise from me. No, anyone whom the community may set in authority must be obeyed in matters small and great, just and . . . otherwise. For there is no greater evil than disobedience [*anarchia*]: it is this that destroys cities, this that makes houses desolate, this that breaks up allied ranks in rout. But when men succeed, it is obedience [*peitharchia*] that most often saves their lives."

But whose words are those? They are the words of Creon in Sophocles's *Antigone*. He is speaking to his son, defending his decision to sentence that son's fiancée to death for trying to give burial rites to her brother contrary to Creon's decree—a decree which he himself in the end will see to be wrong and will seek, too late, to reverse; a decree which will cost him the lives not only of his destined daughter-in-law but also of his wife and his last surviving son.

WHEN Sophocles's audience heard Creon's words, these consequences still lay hidden from them, particularly since there is reason to believe that the story of Antigone and the burial of Polyneices had hitherto been at most a minor detail in the legend of the Seven against Thebes, if indeed it had been current at all. But though the words may not have been on first hearing as deeply ironic as they are to us who know what happens later in the play, they will still have set up important resonances in Athenian minds. It has been observed that Creon's lines contain distinct echoes of the oath of allegiance taken by every Athenian citizen on coming of age.[17] That oath too had something to say about obedience:

> "I will obey those who for the time being exercise authority reasonably, and the established laws, and those which they may establish reasonably in the future."

The implicit definition of "reasonably" (*emphronôs*) may well have been different at different times, but what concerns us now is that the qualification was there—as in Creon's lines it is not. Neither magistrates nor laws (at any rate not future laws) could demand from the Athenian an *unconditional* obedience.

NOT EVEN THE WORD of a god was necessarily infallible. In Aeschylus's *Eumenides*, Apollo justifies Orestes's killing of his mother on the ground that he himself had commanded Orestes to commit the act, and had done so on the instruc-

[16] *Kol ha-adam* (literally, "all of man"), *Ecclesiastes*, ch XII, verse 13.

[17] See P. Siewert, "The Ephebic Oath in Fifth Century Athens", *Journal of Hellenic Studies*, vol. 97 (1977), pp. 102-110. The translation of the Sophocles passage (*Antigone*, lines 663-67, 672-76) is based on the 1987 version by A. L. Brown; on the legend before Sophocles see Brown's introduction, pp. 4-5.

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tions of Zeus—the highest possible authority. Nevertheless, half of the Athenian jury vote against him.[18]

In Sophocles's *Ajax*, the goddess Athena shows Odysseus the spectacle of his enemy in the grip of madness: Ajax is torturing and killing sheep and cattle in the belief that he is maltreating his human foes, Odysseus among them. Athena invites Odysseus to gloat over his enemy's discomfiture. Odysseus refuses because, he says, "I see all we who live are nothing but mere insubstantial shapes or weightless shades". If Ajax can thus fall from the heights of heroic triumph to the depths of insanity and disgrace, so too, Odysseus realises, can he. As the play goes on, it becomes clearer and clearer that Odysseus is right; and if that is so, Athena must be wrong. Certainly the characters who are seen acting as Athena would have had Odysseus act—Menelaus and Agamemnon, who attempt to deny burial to Ajax after his suicide—are both utterly despicable.

I have heard tell of an illustrious saint who "was much condemned by the Fathers of the Church because he refused to do right when the Devil told him to".[19] Here we have it the other way round: a goddess—and the goddess dearest to Athenian hearts—tells Odysseus to do wrong; and he refuses, and is right to refuse. Sophocles—the serenely pious Sophocles, as we used to be taught to regard him—has presented the judgment of one individual human being as superior to that of one of the divine rulers of the universe.

WHEN Sophocles's contemporary, Protagoras of Abdera, said that "Man is the measure of all things, of the things that are that they are, and of the things that are not that they are not",[20] we know that by "man" he meant each individual human being, for he denied the existence of absolute or objective truth.

It was not necessary, though, to go so far as that. The very institution of voting—as fundamental to the Greek idea of what constituted an acceptable political system as it is to our own—depended on the assumption that the best way of arriving at a true judgment or a wise decision was not to confide the power of making that decision to one supreme individual, or to the mass-psychology of a shouting crowd, or to some ritual method of ascertaining the will of a god, but rather, after discussion, to ask a large number of individuals to make up their individual minds.[21]

THIS IS NOT TO SAY that there were no limits to the freedom of individuals to make up their own minds. Anaxagoras and Socrates—two other contemporaries of Sophocles, who in different fields were among the greatest practitioners of free intellectual inquiry—were prosecuted and condemned in Athenian courts for religious unorthodoxy: Anaxagoras fled the country, Socrates stayed and drank hemlock. But their trials did not in truth have very much in common with those of Giordano Bruno or of Galileo, still less with the more recent condemnation, unheard, of Salman Rushdie.

Though in name religious, the two prosecutions were both in reality political. The prosecution of Anaxagoras was designed as an indirect attack on his friend Pericles. As for Socrates, the true gravamen of the charge against him was something that is never mentioned in the *Apology* of Plato, though Xenophon in *his* defence of Socrates's memory devotes half-a-dozen pages to it. As a prosecutor in another case put it half a century later, "You put Socrates the sophist to death because he was shown to have been the teacher of Critias"—Critias the leader of the short-lived oligarchic junta, known to later generations as the Thirty Tyrants, who in about a year had put to death, without trial or with a kangaroo trial, some 7% of the adult male citizens of Athens.[22] Even the atheist Diagoras of Melos, who poured public scorn on all religious observances, might well have been tolerated had he not been seen as a threat to the popularity of the Eleusinian Mysteries, a festival of pilgrimage which must have been almost as profitable to Athens as the Olympic Games were to Elis—and which, unlike them, came round every year.

Certainly, on a broad view, the climate of opinion in the Greek world was exceptionally favourable to inquiry, *historia*, "the questioning and testing of received opinion" as we are now supposed to say. This applied not only in the large communities such as Athens but in quite small and obscure ones: two great philosophers in one generation—Democritus, the father of atomism, and Protagoras—came from the same small town of Abdera on the coast of Thrace. And it went back a long way; there is plenty of questioning of received wisdom, both explicit and implicit, in Homer's *Iliad*.

It goes forward a long way too. The connection is an old but a true one between the rediscovery of Greek learning and the intellectual revolutions of the 16th century, which set *historia* going again on a path that has brought us, with ever-increasing rapidity, to the super-technologised world of today. Perhaps it is in that sense more than in any other that Greek culture is the progenitor of our own. But if our culture is thus built on the *historia* of the past, it also depends on the continuation of *historia* in the present and the future;

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[18] Maybe more than half, if (as is in my view probable) the equal tally of votes for and against Orestes includes Athena's vote in his favour.

[19] This was St Anthony the Hermit—or so Winston Churchill asserted in a speech of 25 May 1938 (Winston S. Churchill, *Into Battle*, 1941, p. 29). But although Athanasius and St Anthony's other biographers record innumerable encounters between their hero and the Devil (always ending in the latter's discomfiture), I have been unable to find any reference to Anthony resisting a diabolical recommendation to do right.

[20] Protagoras, fragment 1, in H. Diels and W. Kranz, *Die Fragmente der Vorsokratiker* (6th ed., Berlin, 1951-52); quoted by Plato in *Theaetetus*, p. 152a, and by later writers.

[21] Ideally by secret ballot—as the Greek word for vote, *psêphos*, indicates. This word (which has given us "psephology") properly means a pebble, the simplest kind of balloting token. In practice, political assemblies—which often had to take a large number of votes in the course of a day—usually voted by show of hands; but decisions affecting the rights of particular individuals were always (at least in Athens) made by ballot, as were the decisions of juries in the law courts.

[22] On the trial of Anaxagoras, see Plutarch, *Pericles*, ch. 32, sect. 2-5; on Socrates and Critias, see Xenophon, *Memorabilia*, book I, ch. 2, sect. 12-47, and Aeschines, *Against Timarchus*, sect. 173.

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and that means not only scientific inquiry in the usual sense, but also inquiry into the life of human beings in society.

It is not too difficult to think of societies in which the natural sciences have been encouraged but the human sciences (among which I include what are commonly called the humanities) have been hamstrung, and the words of particular sages—together with those of whoever happens to be the current Party boss—accorded the seal of absolute and indisputable truth. Few, inside or outside these societies, would now regard them as having been outstandingly successful even in natural science and technology. The lesson is there for us to heed.

Why, after all, do we study the natural world at all? For two reasons—and we may not always know which of them is uppermost in any given piece of research. One is the pure advancement of knowledge—and there is plenty of that to be done in the human sciences as well. The other aim is that which the Institution of Civil Engineers declares to be the object of the profession over which it presides: namely, in one sense or another, "directing the Great Sources of Power in Nature for the use and convenience of man".[23] And that at once begs the question: what *is* the use and convenience of man?

In so far as intellectual inquiry has a utilitarian object, inquiry into nature can inform us about means; inquiry into human nature can inform us, at least some of the time, about ends. It is not by chance that the two arguably most brilliant *natural* philosophers of classical Greece—Democritus and Aristotle—also wrote prolifically on *ethical* philosophy. It will be intellectual inquiry, *historia*, into *both* the natural world *and* the human world that we must hope will enable us, in the century soon to begin, to live on this planet in peace, with at least a tolerable living standard for all, without ruining the environment—the common terrestrial home which our descendents will inherit—and without sacrificing the ethical values that have come down to us from antiquity. Never has it been truer that—as Socrates put it when he refused to buy his life at the price of his silence—"a life devoid of questioning is not a life fit for a human being".[24]

[23] This definition of the profession of a civil engineer, framed by Thomas Tredgold (1788-1829), has appeared in all the Institution's successive Royal Charters. See Institution of Civil Engineers, *Power for the Use of Man: a series of addresses . . . commemorating the 150th anniversary of the Royal Charter of the Institution*, (1978), p. 1.

[24] Plato, *Apology*, p. 38a.

Summer Comes

Summer is a naked god who squeezes night
in his thick fist, lets it peep an hour or so,
then yawns cool mornings and stretches out
contentedly
in poppy mist
to sleep.
The heavy settling of summer. The squalor of it;
seamless, sealed in green.
As summer comes, it seems we know the world
too well, though hidden: the trees
hidden under a hoist of leaves,
their character clogged,
and every growing thing
packed tightly into place,
soothed by the poisonous croon of doves.
No change or stir; a time of no surprises;
leaning heat and waiting.
Wait for the silver tilt of leaves, the kick
of lightning.
But nothing comes out of the swollen sky.
The white light weighs down the gaze;
the brain sparks messages that don't connect;
words will not form;
thoughts are not clearly thought and hang
in heavy air.
Sour summer, going round and round
and round.

Bryn Gunnell

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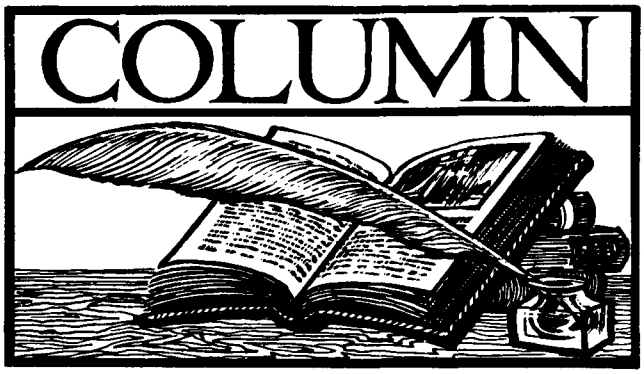

WHEN DOES the once unthinkable become a matter of course? All the time—and not only when falling in love. Seeing Westminster televised, one could hardly imagine that until November 1989 the cameras had been banned from the House of Commons, like newspaper reporters in Dr Johnson's day. Seeing Eastern Europe stirring at last from its post-War nightmare, one wondered how so many people in the West had been able to take the Iron Curtain for granted, a deplorable but inevitable fact of life.

So the process has always been—with vernacular Bibles, universal suffrage, horseless carriages, submarines, air transport, space travel: we look back in wonder at those who once doubted or denied them. I remember in the late 1940s asking a friend at the Cambridge University Press why it didn't publish books in paperback. "Not worth it", was his answer: "There'd be no great saving." But then I too, for years, resisted pocket calculators, word processors, answerphones, and video cassette recorders. These last, I thought (and still do), were popular in Britain largely to escape the inanities broadcast in the early evening, and record the more or less grown-up programmes put out after non-insomniacs have gone to bed.

Their other attraction, of course, is films. True, widescreen pictures suffer on television; true, a movie-house audience greatly enhances comedies, especially those which leave gaps for expected laughter. But even at premium prices, and still more so in the bargain basement, it can be cheaper to watch a cassette in warm, dry, quiet, hygienic comfort at home than to drive, park, stand in line, pay, wait, sit through advertisements, buy popcorn or hear it consumed, and inhale influenza viruses in even the latest multiplex with quadrophonic sound.

For a long time, many people hired their video cassettes. Now I see, with mild surprise at anyone's surprise, that sales are beginning to catch up with hire. To me, that seems natural. I own my favourite books: why not my favourite movies? But the trade has a curious term for video cassette sales: the men with the Velcro chins call it "sell-through". Does this mean that people buy only to resell? If so, we should soon witness the growth of a new retail phenomenon—the Old Curiosity Cassette Shop. I can picture it already: a Dickensian establishment with bull's-eye windows and a bewhiskered custodian, parting the cobwebs to prise from the picturesque muddle a dusty first edition of D. W. Griffith, Pudovkin, or Abel Gance.

Conventional wisdom used to assume that TV and video cassettes would be the natural enemies of cinema film. The contrast between cheap home comfort and a slow expensive outing was thought to be overwhelming. But social habits are more subtle than that. Not all members of families want to cluster round a TV set, or round the same offering. Younger people, involved in courtship rituals, may see the movies as part of their mating dance. *Aficionados* will want to catch the latest films before they reach the video market. And celebrants of various kinds may be tempted by the multiplexes' promise of "a complete evening out". Most of all, watching films is mildly addictive: interest in the cinema, kindled or sustained by the cassette habit (and perhaps by use of the hideously named "camcorder"), can spill over into regular movie-going. Not, of course, on the scale of the 1940s: but cinema attendances, which for decades seemed on an endless slide downwards, have in the last few years begun to rise again. Is it time for festivities in Tinseltown?

Probably not, or not yet. But festivals—yes. All the year round, somewhere, film festivals seem to be going on. I don't mean those pseudo-festivals run by small cinemas in Paris, which periodically advertise *"Le festival des Frères Marx"*, *"Grand Festival Sam Wood"*, or *"Festival de l'humour britannique"*. These are simply repertory reruns of some scratchy old copies they happen to have clawed together. Those aside, however, the film festival has become what a steelworks or an airline used to be: a national status symbol. There are science-fiction festivals, avant-garde festivals, *film noir* festivals, documentary festivals, educational festivals, and animation festivals, as well as those with no particular badge. Altogether, including once-for-all events, about 200 film festivals are staged in any one year. A globe-trotting critic, working hard, could with luck survive on the free lunches alone.

I'm not in that league—though by the time you read this I'll have done jury service at a festival in Brussels. But in recent years I've repeatedly sampled several such annual shindigs, and each time have come away with somewhat altered ideas.

THE LATIN WORD *festus*, root of the medieval *festivalis*, derives from the Sanskrit *bhas*, which seems to have meant "shine": it has nothing to do with the verb *festinare*, "to make haste". Both notions are just about appropriate: so is the cognate overtone of sabbath solemnity, as in church festivals. What's often missing, at least for professionals, is the primary sense of holiday merrymaking. Black ties and ball dresses notwithstanding, film festivals are first and foremost *work*.

The biggest, though not the oldest, is of course Cannes. Anatomised by Alexander Walker in the July-August 1988 issue of ENCOUNTER, this is to feature as fiction this May in Iain Johnstone's *Cannes: The Novel*. But it deserves an encyclopaedia. How else to convey the multiplicity of Cannes? First, there's the dwarfing of its fishing port, a very ancient tale. Already by 1900, when the very first Michelin guide appeared, the town had 19,470 inhabitants and two recommended hotels: the Grand (three stars) and the Hotel des Colonies et des Négociants (sounds inferior, one). Its reputation as a fashionable watering-place had been estab-

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lished in England by Lord Brougham, to whom Cannes erected a statue; Queen Victoria had gone there in 1887. One imagines a blend of fishing nets, parasols, and Bath chairs. Today, the permanent population is 72,787. The port is full of crewed yachts and gin palaces; the hills are dotted with an acne of villas; the riviera is a ferro-concrete Kurfürstendamm. Then, when the Festival comes to town, it's more like a vast medieval trade fair, complete with pickpockets and street performance artists. Crowds appear as if from nowhere to goggle at supposed celebrities, notably at the nightly formal screenings, all police cordons and spotlit stars. Darting about with a press pass the size of a Penguin book, one feels privileged but subordinate, a clever cog in an alien machine.

A machine it is, but not for living in. Its primary purpose is to sell. In the basement of the Festival Palace, beached like some sand-coloured liner and blocking the view from the town, the higgling and chaffering take place. Looped videos of mostly terrible films bleat and flicker in the rows of dealing cubicles; young hard-sell experts, the men with soft faces, the girls with hard eyes, button-hole prospects or screech over coffee in the crowded bar. Around the town, the normal cinemas are showing films that may or may not have made the official selection. Distributors, exhibitors, and critics slip in free to taste an unknown masterpiece: usually, they slip out disappointed. After an official screening, the film's stars and director stage a press conference and photocall. Most of the questions are unbelievably banal.

Is there anything festive? There are parties—on yachts, in the big hotels, in villas, in pavilions close to the beach. Their purpose is usually commercial, but the participants have fun. A generation ago, photographers used to pursue topless starlets (or starless toplets), who seemed to think of Cannes as a casting couch. Nowadays, so little fruit or flesh is forbidden that the cheesecake gingerbread has lost its guilt.

Cannes is still a must in the movie buff's calendar. It tends to get the most prominent films: it awards influential prizes: it can make reputations, as it did last year for Steven Soderbergh, the 26-year-old director of *Sex, Lies and Videotape*. Above all, it's where serious money changes hands—and not only into pickpockets' pouches.

VENICE IS MUCH MORE my idea of a Festival. Movies, not money, one feels as its driving force. The oldest of all, it's billed as an "exhibition", because since it began, in 1932, it's always been part of the Venice Biennale, although it happens every year. On first attending it, out on the Lido, I'd feared the worst. Venice I knew well, but the Lido I'd avoided. I remembered being puzzled by an American girl I'd met in Florence years before: she'd come back from the Lido, and shuddered. "It's so *neurotic*", she'd said. "Chewed fingernails in the sand?" I'd suggested; but she'd never explained. So, landing from the water-bus, I peered around for signs of instability. Nothing seemed shaky except the foundation piles.

What was delightful was the rusticity. If you live near the main street, you can walk to the Festival every day along a leafy canal bank, with tree-roots lifting the tarmac like gnarled subterranean claws. Old ladies in black, and young girls, cycle slowly past; private rowing-boats are berthed at the back doors of canal-side houses. The police station occupies a neat Italian villa that might have been designed by Magritte. There are cars, but mostly stationary; those that do move travel at a stately, unItalian pace.

Yet when you reach the Festival, there's no doubt that this is Italy. Amazingly swift service in a roadside snack-bar; television cables everywhere; confused, genial shoving: no cross concierge-type ladies; no ruthless officialdom; no white-gauntleted police. A nod and a smile get you into the holy-of-holies, where the Festival Director is dealing with four visitors at once. Plans change constantly. Extra screenings are laid on for latecomers. The evening shows are for the general public, in sweatshirts, jeans, and trainers, not costume jewellery and boiled shirts.

The films, admittedly, are a second crop, since Venice comes three months or so after Cannes. But although some are less celebrated, many are more rewarding, as if chosen by a connoisseur, not a committee. Of course there are duds, some from Italian directors: but one of my favourite films of recent years was shown last September in Venice—Pupi Avati's *Storia di ragazzi e di ragazze*, on a prickly betrothal party in the 1930s at which a bourgeois Bologna family meets its peasant future in-laws. Beautifully incarnated by a professional cast, and shot in evocative black-and-white, this film is like nothing so much as an early Ermanno Olmi picture, before pretension took over from neo-realism.

Avati won no prize at Venice, for the conclusive reason that he was on the jury. But the Venice awards, while they may not attract the capital that prowls la Croisette in Cannes, are often a better indication of quality—for those old-fashioned enough to see film as an art form. The "neurotic" Lido, in fact, feels like a refuge of culture in a world where accountants seem increasingly to rule.

MY THIRD FESTIVAL last year, and for years before, was in November in London, mainly on the South Bank. Like Venice, the London Film Festival is partly an affair for the public: seats are bookable, and many are quickly sold out. The films are often remarkable. As well as new offerings from Britain and from Third World countries, they include the pick of those shown earlier at Cannes, Berlin, Venice, and elsewhere. Scouts from London are very diligent at these other festivals: they seem to see more movies, at more unearthly hours, than anyone else. The result is gratifying: Pupi Avati's film, spotted in Venice, became a post-programme addition to the London parade. No one with time to spare, and a taste for films which may never win commercial distribution, should ignore the London Festival simply because it's held in a rainy month and a rainy city too close to home.

Nevertheless, it has its drawbacks. Although a growing number of London's films are now shown "on the square"—in the West End, in Leicester-Square and other cinemas—the majority have to be seen at the National Film Theatre, remote enough from the West End for guests at the Gala Opening "on the square" to be taken by bus to the Gala Reception at the NFT. *Habitués* soon find their own way to

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this South-Bank outpost. Mine is via the Embankment, followed by a walk across Hungerford Bridge and along the south side of the Thames. But this is a drag, especially in November, with neither the charm of Venice nor the pizazz of Cannes.

The other main weakness of the London Film Festival is that it's only a showcase, not a competition. The reason, I'm told, is some international institution which rules the affairs of festivals: those in the category of London are non-competitive and not allowed to award a prize. Where there's a prize, generally speaking, there tends to be top brass: the press keeps an eye on it; radio and television cover it; even the money men may cock an ear. It gives an edge to the proceedings, and a point to the Festival: otherwise, London risks looking like an admittedly *de luxe* version of those Paris cinema "festivals", a sort of *"Festival des festivals"* or Old Curiosity Cinema Shop.

So here's a suggestion. If the London Film Festival can't officially award prizes, why doesn't some enterprising business firm step in? At Venice last year, an ice-cream manufacturer helped sponsor the Festival and awarded a prize of his own. Whitbread and Booker give book prizes: why not a London Film Prize from one of their competitors, preferably with a pun-worthy name?

Which leads to another suggestion. While the BBC and Channel 4 have consistently invested in the British film industry, other sources of money in London have been chary or frightened off. Investment in British feature films fell from £270 million in 1986 to £126 million in 1988. Yet during that time the City was awash with capital, and the country in general awash with credit, if not actually drowning. What makes British money men so suspicious of Wardour Street?

Don't answer that question. But try this as an idea. If the City feels at sea in Soho, and film-makers don't know how to convince financiers, isn't there a need for intermediaries or brokers who know something of each? People familiar with movies and in touch with public taste, who can smell a good idea and spot a good script, yet have enough financial savvy not to drift off to dreamland. People who are neither Wardour Street nor Wall Street, neither buccaneers nor gamblers, neither rash nor over-cautious, neither poachers nor gamekeepers. Authors have such people: they call them "agents". Why not film-makers too?

Both suggestions, of course, may seem unthinkable. But if the London Film Festival had some sponsored prizes, and the British film industry had some agent brokers, I'm sure we'd wonder how we ever did without them.

M

Motorway Incident

Deadline drivers racing along
Their set routes this high-pressure weather
Glimpse on the central reservation

Two crash helmets laid together
Among the summer's burnt-out bits
As though still talking to each other.

Beside these shining husks are set
The means of transport redefined
For those two bodies under blankets.

Likely those lads headed the wind,
Took divinity by the horns,
Devil-booted, leather-skinned.

The fast lane for the fastest run,
Each a Boreas astride his
Roarer in the morning sun.

Invaders of the nineteen-nineties,
Dynamos, tomorrow's men,
Sent on the straight road home like this,

Paying for the life we sold them—
Access, visa, loan—the whole
Works to no known destination.

Jane Wilson

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Peter Redgrove

Maroon

I could have sworn they were lighted churches
Far out at sea, like tall temples made
Of dots of light and their interactions,
And that was a lighted candle in a sconce
Gliding over the polished water of its own accord,
But it was the factory ships and a busy chandler's scow;
Though the combined throb of their engines did impart
The look of worship to the roar of lights.
I thought it was the wind travelling in the leaves,
The breeze of sun itself climbing the thunder-steps,
But it was also the gardener's dog rushing
Along the paths with a green bough in his mouth.

I thought it was the maroon snapping in the sky,
But the gardener's tree is full of moths
And when night falls the lighted spires
Draw them from balsamic shires towards the ships
To fashion trees of light with fluttering leaves of moth.
I thought it was the maroon outside snapping
The arc of its high spire, but it was a drop of oil
Of moth flaring in my candle here, a lingerer,
A pinch of balsam and its touchpaper; but I thought
Of a fearful door open for a flash, smelling of trees.

Quiet Time

The spider of the wainscot
Fell to the pliers newly arrived
Of a centipede out of the WC pedestal;
This aggressor was like the last bones of a God
Waiting for resurrection of the whole body,
Like an Osiris pillar, a small one,
A small god's spinal column
Running independently, as a God's might do—
But also like a long twist of toffee
Of that colour as I sat remembering
When toffee was the gold of my boy's mouth,
And would not pluck the fillings from my teeth;
And this long twisted toffee has its own jaws
With which it strikes down the defenceless weaver
I have watched patching his sail
For several days in this same cloistered toilet—

My quiet time; a cloister's clyster, that centipede
Is like a dark cloister running on its own
That has loosened itself from the Abbey stones
Incorporating into its twilight many brethren
Sprinting all together on brotherly legs
Like Chinese masquers chattering in their dragon—

Hunting for all the tremulous spinsters
And all the lockchesters in the world,
Hunting for the alchemistic spiders
For they have within them a Benedictine
Stilled from the swarms of prayerful night-moths
One of which now splashes the cream walls
Easing the fretted constellations of its cream wings;
I thought it was a speckling of ink, like—

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Stones

Certain stones if roasted in a fire
Will crepitate with an instantaneous contribution
Of stone smell, like the odour of a mountain

That has suddenly entered the room. Others burn quietly,
Sublime to calcareous crystals stuck to the hearth-back;
Human bones from their fat give out a ghat lambency

From the organic portion which is consumed,
But after this they survive most flames
Preserving the anatomy; though brittle or powdery

Hardly altering their shape at all:
The eternal grin rests among the ashes,
Smoking, rubs away as the front door blows its draught.

Some highly-charged bones full of evolution
Will detonate and scatter everywhere their fire,
The knobbly backs of thunder-lizards . . . there will be a surge

Of electrical field as their pattern snaps—
The radio chatters static like Emergency;
Cornwall granite, roasted, will do this, will

Like the bones of fighting giants grenade.

The Black Captains

The great black ship *Barometer*:
He is wearing pure robes without buttons,
The captain, robes that flow
Without interruptive fastenings,
Without seams or fastenings, the captain
A seamless and buttonless
Black man pacing black planks.

The *Barometer* turns into the harbour-mouth
Arousing wheel upon wheel of circling water,
That goes on circling for ever

For this haven records between its quays
Packed in its watermovements all the ships
That have ever entered, they have scored
Their pathways and traces facilitating
Navigation as each old friend returns,

Any ship returning
Evokes its own hull-tune and the water opens
Easily to that hull-tune and to
The deep-throated sails, for that harbour air
Parts more freely the more it is entered:

All the ships of the haven adjusting into their homes
Dressed in sails or steam like spirits returning
Fitted spirit to spirit through air and water, their captains
Black men in national dress of seamless flow.

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Visions of Elysium

Condorcet: Liberal or Revolutionary?—By RENEE WINEGARTEN

"Fabre d'Eglantine has spoken of 'Marat's sensibility'. This remark has astounded those who mistake sensibility for kindness, and who are unaware that impassioned sensibility can turn to rage."
Jules Michelet, HISTOIRE DE LA RÉVOLUTION FRANÇAISE

WHETHER INTELLECTUALS move from reform to revolution by reason or passion, through quirk of character or force of circumstance (that convenient excuse for almost anything), few offer a more exemplary, intriguing, and ambivalent trajectory than Marie-Jean-Antoine-Nicolas-Caritat, Marquis de Condorcet (1743-94), savant, educationist, reformer, and political activist. Recently, he has been promoted as *the* man of the bicentenary of the French Revolution, and qualified—high accolade—as "a modern". An admirable biography of this high-minded humanitarian thinker—which, so rumour has it, is to be made into a film—appeared two years ago, in a most timely manner.[1]

Other, more familiar figures, all of them one-time friends of Condorcet's, might have been expected to occupy the leading place: Mirabeau, for instance, the mighty orator and lost leader; Sieyès, that enigmatic and influential cold fish who proclaimed that the Third Estate was "the nation"; or La Fayette, dashing hero of the American War of Independence. Hitherto Condorcet, "the last of the *philosophes*"—in some sense a "*libéral*" before that word acquired its political currency—has not exactly loomed large in histories of the conflagration. The reasoning behind the choice of one who is now considered to be an ancestor of French political liberalism is not too hard to perceive.[2]

Evidently, the purpose in selecting Condorcet is to underline all those liberal conquests of the Enlightenment and/or the French Revolution which now form an essential part of civilised life. Hence the current stress on the universal significance of the *Déclaration des Droits de l'Homme et du Citoyen* which falls in with contemporary concerns, since regrettably these rights are not yet universally enforced. In order to emphasise liberal trends, out go Danton and Robespierre, those eternally dramatic personages (who admittedly were not centre-stage in 1789).

Moreover, along with the viperish Marat and with Saint-Just, the exterminating angel, out go incitement to murder, the parade of severed heads on pikes, mob rule, the September massacres, and the Terror of 1793-94 that continued *after* the danger that was (and is) its much-publicised excuse had passed and the revolutionary armies were victorious. Above all, with the present emphasis on liberal values, one can dispense with the idea of the Revolution as "a single block" from the fall of the Bastille to the fall of Robespierre on 9 Thermidor 1794. For the "single block" theory assumes that the Terror is an integral, inevitable, or necessary part of the Revolution. Those who deny this theory are suggesting that the Terror was an aberration: if so, the Revolution in itself can be seen as "a good thing" whose waters are essentially pure and wholesome.

In this context, we are being invited to regard Condorcet as the true symbol of the cataclysm: as the liberal-minded reformer, constant advocate of the rule of law, the intellectual turned revolutionary who boldly ventured to attack Robespierre, thus incurring the Incorruptible's cold hatred, and bringing about his own ruin. The death of the outlawed Condorcet in prison during the Terror—whether from natural causes, by suicide in the high Roman fashion (or possibly even by murder?)—retains its mystery. Astonishingly, he composed with ostensible serenity, while he was proscribed and in hiding, the incomplete work by which he is perhaps best known: *Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain*, the expression of his enduring faith in the indefinite progress of humankind. It offers an egregious example of a man's "revolutionary" hope and faith when he is faced with the inconvenient facts of wanton bloodshed, inhumanity, horror, and disaster.

THE FATEFUL ENIGMA of his death, combined with his unshakeable belief in the ultimate triumph of his ideas and ideals, endows Condorcet with the legendary aura of the heroic revolutionary martyr which has fascinated *littérateurs* and intellectuals down the ages. He himself believed in the self-sacrifice of the magnanimous man of genius for the public good. It was Mme de Staël, influenced by his ideas,

[1] Elisabeth and Robert Badinter, *Condorcet: un intellectuel en politique* (Fayard, 1988).

[2] See André Jardin, *Histoire du Libéralisme Politique* (1985), pp. 144-49, 155; Keith Michael Baker, *Condorcet* (1975).

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who remarked that his death "partook of martyrdom". Contemplating the Stalinist Juggernaut and its victims, Romain Rolland (humanitarian turned fellow-traveller) could coolly exalt Condorcet's sacrifice and example: "Human progress, affirmed with intrepid calm by Condorcet when he was proscribed, before he committed suicide, is bought at the cost of millions of sacrifices." According to Rolland, writing in 1939, the three goals of Condorcet's credo still had to be fulfilled: "Destruction of inequality between nations; progress of equality in a people itself; and finally the perfectibility of man." By this direct quotation from Condorcet's *magnum opus*, Rolland seems to confirm David Caute's thesis of a link between the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment and rationalistic fellow-travellers of the 1920s and '30s.[3]

Now that Marxist-Leninist utopianism looks thoroughly discredited, and is quite *démodé* among Parisian intellectuals, the current elevation of Condorcet as the great "liberal revolutionary" happens to be convenient in the present French political and cultural climate. But the complex man—reticent and rash, torn between reason and passion, impelled as it were by the revolutionary impetus—somehow refuses to fit into the mould so neatly prepared for him.

> *". . . Condorcet, whose superior intellectual gifts are beyond question, but who none the less played a greater role in politics through his passions than his ideas."*
> **Mme de Staël,** CONSIDÉRATIONS SUR LA RÉVOLUTION FRANÇAISE

CERTAINLY, AT FIRST SIGHT, Condorcet's liberal and humanitarian credentials in the period before the fall of the Bastille on 14 July 1789 may appear impeccable. His essay on integral calculus, published in 1765 when he was only twenty-two, brought him the friendship and patronage of Jean Le Rond d'Alembert, one of the founders of the *Encyclopédie*. D'Alembert presented him to his mistress, Julie de Lespinasse, in whose celebrated salon he met the leading liberal-minded spirits of the day, from Diderot to Turgot and Malesherbes. In the company of D'Alembert, Condorcet travelled to Ferney to visit the aged Voltaire, with whom he was to conduct a lively correspondence on the era's savage injustices. Nothing outraged Condorcet more than injustice, and he inherited or shared Voltaire's fine sense of irony when scourging the bigotry, folly, and cruelty of those who wielded power over their fellow creatures. It was actually through the promptings of Condorcet that Voltaire took action in 1774 to try to obtain the revision of the sentence passed on the young Chevalier de La Barre, accused of blasphemy some eight years before; he had been condemned to have his right hand cut off and his tongue torn out, and then to be burnt alive.

Condorcet was active in attempting to right many other notorious miscarriages of justice. He loathed feudal burdens like the *corvée* imposed upon unfortunates least able to bear them. In a telling pamphlet, published anonymously in 1776, he invited have-nots to remember that:

> ". . . in the city where frivolity reigns, very upstanding men have been found who have ventured to wish that you should remain condemned to work for a fortnight without pay . . . when it would cost them only a tax on their superfluous wealth. . . . Remember that their voices are raised solely in their own interest, and kindly cease being so foolish as to believe that they are ever speaking for yours."

As he wrote in a moment of gloom to Turgot: "It is only the lower classes [*le petit peuple*] whose happiness should be one's concern. . . . The others are nothing but crawling poisonous creatures."[4]

On such matters as the emancipation of black slaves, religious toleration and freedom of worship for Protestants and Jews, and the rights of women to full citizenship, Condorcet was an impassioned advocate. He stood alongside or sometimes in advance of the leading *philosophes* of his time. There is no denying that the nobility of his stance up to 1789 invites admiration.

Unlike his friend Chamfort, pessimistic aphorist and hanger-on of the aristocracy turned revolutionary, Condorcet was not moved to criticise the failings of the régime out of resentment but on principle. Where Chamfort (cast-off bastard offspring of a high-born woman and a humble canon) was *déclassé*, Condorcet came of ancient lineage. Yet there was something odd about Condorcet's upbringing. When, five weeks after his birth, his soldier-father was killed, his extremely pious mother dedicated the infant to the Virgin, and she kept her child in skirts until he was eight years old. He remained devoted to his mother until her death when he was already middle-aged. In later life, Condorcet retained a certain repressed air of timidity and awkwardness, and he suffered from a weak constitution.

HIS UNCLE, a noted bishop, arranged for the boy to be sent to the Jesuit College in Reims, where he spent some four years, and left with undying loathing of everything to do with established religion, Church and clergy. Continuing his studies in Paris, Condorcet rapidly took to mathematics, a discipline more to his liking since it was concerned with truths that could be calculated and demonstrated in accordance with reason. He was to extend mathematical calculations to the fields of the political and social sciences. Soon, he would be celebrated throughout Europe and beyond, and acquainted with many of the great figures of the age, from Adam Smith to Paine, Jefferson and Franklin.

Standard-bearer of the virtue of analysis and thinking for oneself, Condorcet also conceived that he was endowed with an imagination which he qualified as "*romanesque*" (that is, an imagination fired by or akin to that revealed in fictional

[3] Mme de Staël, *Considérations sur la Révolution Française* (ed. Jacques Godechot, 1983), Part III, chapter iii, p. 265. Romain Rolland, *Quinze Ans de Combat* (1935), p. 96; "Nécessité de la Révolution", *Europe*, 15 July 1939, quoted by David James Fisher in *Romain Rolland and the Politics of Intellectual Engagement* (1988), p. 287; Condorcet, *Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain*, 10e Epoque, *Oeuvres* (ed. A. Condorcet O'Connor and F. Arago, 1847-49), vol. 6, p. 237; David Caute, *The Fellow-Travellers: A Postscript to the Enlightenment* (1973).

[4] Condorcet, "Bénissons le ministre", and Letter to Turgot, 1776, quoted in Badinter, *Condorcet*, pp. 133-34.

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romances). With his friend and confidante, Amélie Suard, wife of the notoriously indolent man of letters Jean-Baptiste Suard, he engaged in a platonic affair for many years, until personal strains and politics were to drive them apart. As for her, she told him that he was "*un homme romanesque*", after the style of the prolific novelist Mme Riccoboni, whose sentimental romance stirred her to the depths. Condorcet admitted to her that he had "*romanesque*" ideas because, he said, "I do not know the world, because its prejudices and its dull uniformity have not succeeded in making me sensible and stupid".[5] Both of them delighted in novels over which they could weep buckets, with that extraordinary facility for tears so characteristic of a certain 18th-century sensibility. He reflected on suicide, even then, believing that nothing survives after death, regarding it as a kind of weariness of spirit likely to overtake persons who think deeply about life in general.

At that time, when he was stirred by such dark thoughts, Condorcet was involved in an unhappy passion for a coquette, Mme de Meulan, a passion whose ups—or mostly downs—he confided to Amélie Suard. Passionate and reckless this apparently reasonable man would prove to be, and not only when he later fell in love with Mme Suard's niece. He was then nearly forty, the girl with whom he eloped a mere eighteen. Somehow, the affair was hushed up discreetly. Much to Mme Suard's deeper chagrin, in 1786 Condorcet married the young, beautiful and intelligent Sophie de Grouchy, niece of Charles Dupaty, leading figure of the Bordeaux *Parlement*, with whom he had campaigned mightily on behalf of three innocent peasants of Chaumont condemned to torture on the wheel.

CONDORCET'S SENSIBILITY was acute. He lived in an age that, despite its cruelty, cynicism and frivolity, esteemed tenderness of feeling as much as wit. Already, in his youth (so he told Turgot), he had begun thinking about justice and virtue: "I thought I saw that our urge to be just and virtuous was grounded in the pain necessarily felt by a sensitive person at the idea of another sensitive person's suffering."[6] This, he assured Turgot, was his credo. Since then, he had sought to preserve this feeling: he had given up hunting, which he enjoyed, and he would not even kill insects unless they were very harmful. Later, he was to say that the rights of men derive from the fact that they are creatures of feeling ("*êtres sensibles*"), capable of acquiring moral ideas and of reasoning about them. Since women have the same qualities, they necessarily have equal rights.

Condorcet's view of compassion is very close to that of Rousseau. Pity has to be nourished and directed, thought Jean-Jacques, so that it embraces the love of all men (a love equivalent to that of justice), and becomes transformed into "virtue". For Condorcet too, compassion, love of mankind, and justice are interwoven. Ironically, compassion taken as the key to virtue can swiftly turn to cruelty—one is reminded of Chamfort's paradox when in his revolutionary phase: "Today we must be cruel out of humanity."[7] Ironically, too, justice or the respect for law would become the first virtue to be dispensed with during "the reign of virtue".

Condorcet gave voice to his compassion in the eloquent dedicatory epistle that he addressed to black slaves in his *Réflexions sur l'esclavage des nègres* (1781), where he spoke of his heart "shattered by the sight of your misfortunes". His efforts to obtain justice for those whom he regarded as his brothers were to be rewarded by the lasting enmity of the slave-owners. All who exploited the underdog whether at home or abroad aroused his indignation. He was divided between tenderness for the underprivileged, or what he called "love of humanity", the solid foundation of virtue, and hatred for those who stood in the way of the advent of a just society, the *canaille* of every sort, "the crowd of fools, knaves, schemers and fanatics".[8] The distinction between, on the one hand, men (like himself) who are generous, enlightened by reason, virtuous by nature, disinterested or "pure" and, on the other, those who are idiots or rogues, between men of genius and ambitious mediocrities, underlies his world-view.

Humankind is good, yet thwarted by stupid or Machiavellian human beings: it is a paradox that he never sought to resolve. The word "evil" is not part of his vocabulary. He told Voltaire that he thought human wickedness was often much exaggerated. Condorcet could never have written, as did Chamfort:

> "Men are so perverse that the mere hope and even the mere wish to correct them, to see them being reasonable and honest, is nonsense, a novelistic idea ["*une idée romanesque*"] to be forgiven only in the very young and innocent."[9]

On the contrary, Condorcet claimed to trust that, through the efforts of men of genius, all those blind to his elysium, in the shape of the fools and fanatics he excoriated, would one day be brought to see the light. His faith in his own rightness was as rigid as that of the ecclesiastics he derided.

WRITING TO TURGOT in 1774, Condorcet suggested that "virtue consists in doing good and in loving humanity passionately". Passion was the key. A few years later, in his Eulogy of Michel de l'Hôpital, the great statesman who advocated peace and toleration during the 16th-century Wars of Religion, Condorcet wrote: "Hope never abandons great passions; and the love of public good was a real passion with him; he had all its characteristics, and even its illusions."[10] That last phrase—on the "illusions" of the love of public good in the statesman who was to become, as it were, Condorcet's "role model" in similar difficult times when France was torn between warring factions—might hint at private doubts which the *philosophe* liked to underplay.

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[5] *Correspondance inédite de Condorcet et Madame Suard 1771-1791* (ed. Elisabeth Badinter, 1988), pp. 67-69.
[6] Condorcet, Letter to Turgot, 13 December 1773, *Oeuvres*, vol. I, p. 220.
[7] Quoted by Claude Arnaud, *Chamfort* (1988), p. 259.
[8] Condorcet, Letter to Voltaire, 1774, *Oeuvres*, vol. I, p. 33.
[9] Chamfort, *Maximes et pensées*, no. 598.
[10] Condorcet, *Eloge de Michel de l'Hôpital*, *Oeuvres*, vol. III, p. 493.

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In her affectionate portrait of Condorcet, written before 1776, Julie de Lespinasse observed that those who did not know him really well thought him cold and impassive. Although he was in private extremely generous, helpful and loving to his friends, he never made any public show of affection. In a society that adored the art of conversation, he was timid, spoke little, appeared remote or withdrawn. However, she wrote:

> "This spirit, so calm and temperate in the common procedure of life, becomes ardent and fiery when it is a question of defending the oppressed, or what is still dearer to him, men's freedom and the honour of the unfortunate; then his zeal attains to passion; he has its warmth and pain, he suffers, acts, speaks, writes, with all the energy of an active and passionate soul."[11]

Zeal, passion, beneath a frigid-seeming exterior—these were to strike those who knew him best.

When Turgot became Minister in 1774, Condorcet showered him with advice. Turgot replied to his friend:

> "I am not going to reply, Sir, to all your mad ideas. . . . On many points you are preaching to the converted, on others you are not in a position to realise what circumstances allow, and above all, you are too impatient."[12]

Once, Turgot amiably called his friend "*un mouton enragé*". The word spread: it was current among Condorcet's enemies by 1790, and was later to be quoted by Carlyle. As for D'Alembert, he spoke of Condorcet as "a snow-capped volcano", evidently sharing Turgot's view of a man of deceptive calm who was seething with explosive passion within.

KNOWN TO ALL HIS friends as a person of kindly disposition, "*le bon* Condorcet" also surprised them at times with the acidulous malice of his wit when he was depicting the follies and vanities of the day. Voltaire spoke of Condorcet's "just scorn", that quality with which French intellectuals tend to be liberally endowed. Condorcet often betrays the biting irony and the contempt that issue from pride and above all from a profound sense of (genuine) effortless superiority, as revealed for instance in the marvellously lofty ironic attitude of Corneille's Nicomède. He surprised Amélie Suard by giving voice to his self-esteem when he failed to be elected in January 1791:

> "If, instead of the folly of giving positions to the cocks-of-the-walk in each district, Paris had the pride to form its administrative bodies from among men known throughout France and even throughout Europe, it would make a different choice."[13]

The scourge of the privileged was a complete aristocrat, contemptuous of intellectual inferiors and of the mob. Unlike his peers, and despite his limited wherewithal, he never cooled his heels in the antechambers of the Court at Versailles in order to solicit a lucrative position.

His hatred could be intense and, once aroused, was rarely extinguished. Mme de Staël's father, the Swiss-born Protestant banker Jacques Necker—who was to succeed Turgot in charge of the country's disordered finances—became the enduring object of Condorcet's detestation. How could Necker dare to write a eulogy of Colbert, the Sun King's Minister, who had imposed such cruel punishments for failure to pay the odious salt tax (*la gabelle*)? How could anyone have any esteem for Necker, whose weighty and pretentious style proved to be a source of merriment for both Voltaire and Condorcet? "Besides, I can hold out no hope for a man who thinks Shakespeare's tragedies are masterpieces . . .", wrote Condorcet to Voltaire, whose didactic neo-classical dramas he preferred.[14]

Worse still, Necker opposed Turgot's liberal policy of free trade in cereals, which Condorcet passionately espoused. Rightly or wrongly, Condorcet suspected Necker of dirty tricks during the riots over foodstuffs in 1775. Unfortunately for him, Necker, together with his wife and her much-frequented salon, had created a kind of propaganda network of literary associates and clients, including Condorcet's friends, the Suards, who were on the Neckers' pension list. Nothing, however, would deter Condorcet, the aristocrat indifferent to money, from excoriating Necker in and out of season, with a tactlessness that bordered on the outrageous, as a speculator, a foreigner who had made it rich, a parvenu. Necker remained his "King Charles's head": on no account would he listen to any of his friends who urged him to moderate his violent tone.

He could thus move from reason to excess, going over the edge when he felt his loyalties or principles were at stake. In the dangerous days ahead, he would lose a number of distinguished friends, like the Duchesse d'Enville (*née* La Rochefoucauld) for failing to control his political passion in her salon. In the matter of hatred, Condorcet was to get as

Mme de Staël

[11] Julie de Lespinasse, *Portrait de M. le Marquis de Condorcet*, in Condorcet, *Oeuvres*, vol. I, pp. 633-34.
[12] Quoted in Badinter, *Condorcet*, p. 102
[13] Condorcet, Letter to Mme Suard, January 1791, *Correspondance inédite* (ed. Elisabeth Badinter), p. 252.
[14] Condorcet, Letter to Voltaire, 14 November 1776, *Oeuvres*, vol. I, p. 134.

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good as he gave: his equally impassioned one-time friend, the liberal-minded Malesherbes (who would perish with his family by the guillotine), once told Chateaubriand: "That man was my friend; today I would not scruple to kill him like a dog."[15] By then, the lines had been inexorably drawn between supporters of an enlightened monarchy and "*patriotes*" or radical revolutionaries.

> *"The time will surely come at last, when the sun will shed its light upon a world made up of free men who admit no other ground but their reason; when tyrants and slaves, priests and their stupid or hypocritical tools will no longer exist except in history or on the stage. . . ."*
>
> **Condorcet,** ESQUISSE D'UN TABLEAU HISTORIQUE DES PROGRÈS DE L'ESPRIT HUMAIN

WITH THE BENEFIT of hindsight, Condorcet's vision of the ideal society is likely to prompt sardonic irony if not exquisite pain. It has always appealed to those who want existence to be orderly and controllable, and who believe that human nature can be changed. Reason alone will move mountains: under its sway, slavery and war, ignorance, bigotry and savagery will disappear. Education and talent will eventually solve problems that now appear insuperable.

However, education should not rest on the teachings of the past or of experience (and Condorcet had some sharp comments to make about Montesquieu). Customs, "prejudices", should be uprooted. For, since truth, reason, justice, and the rights of men, as well as the interests of property, liberty, and safety, are the same everywhere, it follows that "A good law should be the same for all men . . . ." As the late Professor J. L. Talmon expressed it, with Condorcet the case between rationalist politics and political empiricism was never made clearer.[16] There was something in Condorcet's view of rule by an élite of mandarins (*philosophes*, enlightened men of science and learning), and his vision of future "technocratic" bliss that is scarcely "liberal".

On happiness in society, that will of the wisp, Condorcet felt the "need" to believe that it could indeed be attainable, despite a serious proviso on its extent, given the human condition—a proviso that he then seems almost to dismiss. He asks rhetorically how the virtuous citizen can fail to hope when he sees that:

> ". . . in order to achieve happiness for himself, at least as far as happiness can belong to feeling and perishable beings, it would suffice for men to will it, since their greatest misfortunes have their origin in a mass of vices and prejudices which are not the work of nature."

The virtuous citizen perceives, too, that in order to rectify these ills:

> ". . . it would only be necessary to enlighten [all] peoples about their real interests and to show how a few simple truths would establish the happiness of mankind on a solid foundation."[17]

This was his opinion in his Eulogy of Michel de l'Hôpital: it was to remain basically unchanged.

Naturally, the conviction that there existed a simple way to change the world and man inspired Condorcet's reforming zeal. During Turgot's period in charge of the country's economic affairs, Condorcet (appointed Inspector of the Mint) acquired a taste for political action. Evolution was then his watchword. He would agree with Benjamin Franklin that the good acquired by reason is preferable to that attainable by "enthusiasm", because it is more lasting (as he put it in his eulogy of the American founding father).

In the *Justification* that he began to pen after he was proscribed under the reign of virtue, he stressed that one should not be too far in advance of public opinion. With proper timely reform, insurrection would never be necessary. The Constitution and justly instituted laws must always be respected. Yet, since beings are fallible and times change, periodic constitutional reform should be enshrined in the Constitution itself. This was his gospel, and its betrayal would contribute to his downfall. (Precision in the use of words was equally vital to him, and that was why he could criticise the much-lauded "Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen" of 1789 on the ground of vagueness.)

TIME WOULD SHOW, however, that he could not always stand by these principles. For one thing, he came to perceive that revolution proved swifter than evolution in attaining the desired ends. For another, it was not always easy to distinguish the virtuous citizen from the seeming-virtuous one or the political opponent (and these false "*patriotes*" or charlatans were to be added to the mediocrities, fools, and knaves who eluded the embrace of his love for humanity).

This would be made clear in Condorcet's pastiche entitled *Le Véritable et le Faux Ami du Peuple*, which purports to be a recently discovered fragment from the *Characters* ascribed to the Greek philosopher Theophrastus. It condemns the frivolity of the Athenians (or French) for their ingratitude towards the most worthy citizens, such as the noble and virtuous Philodème (Condorcet's *alter ego*), whose conduct is compared with that of the ambitious, self-seeking demagogue, Démagoras. If the people, "led astray by orators", have committed violent deeds, Philodème expresses deep grief and does not conceal his indignation. He does not look for vain excuses by alluding to the faults of the victims of popular vengeance: ". . . he does not ask whether the blood shed was really so pure" (as did Barnave when the financier Foulon and his son-in-law Bertier were savagely murdered by the mob in 1789). Philodème speaks out boldly in favour of respect for law: the victim "was perhaps a peculator or traitor, but as for you, you are murderers", he loudly proclaims.

In contrast, the despicable Démagoras flatters the mob,

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[15] Chateaubriand, *Mémoires d'outre-tombe* (ed. Maurice Levaillant and Georges Moulinier, 1951), vol. I, p. 144.

[16] Condorcet, *Observations sur le 29e Livre de l'Esprit des Lois* (1780), *Oeuvres*, vol. I, p. 378; J. L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (1952), p. 26.

[17] Condorcet, *Eloge de Michel de l'Hôpital*, *Oeuvres*, vol. III, pp. 463-64.

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encourages its passions, applauds the injustices it has committed, makes excuses for violence: "A few brigands have perpetrated disorders? How good the people are!" he cries. "I love them all the more for it."[18] *His* law is the popular will as manifested in the streets, not in the legally-constituted assemblies. Démagoras never stops talking about equality and his love for it, but he is acting out of private interest and ambition. He may still be the people's favourite in a few years time, prophesies Condorcet tellingly, but he will become its tyrant.

> *"Those who have not witnessed at first hand popular passions in motion cannot possibly comprehend how . . . self-command can be swept away."*
> **Etienne Dumont,** SOUVENIRS

WHAT HAPPENED to modify Condorcet's view on insurrection, mob rule, revolutionary necessity? As ever, the great problem facing the exponent of rationalist politics was that things declined to move in accordance with reason (whose dream produces monsters), with nature (which can be red in tooth and claw), with tranquil contemplation in the study. Moreover, politicians, as distinct from *philosophes* or *idéologues*, were usually more interested in the pursuit of power than in lofty principles. It was not enough to despise and denounce the demagogues in print: the era was marked by brilliant orators like Vergniaud, a friend with whom the withdrawn Condorcet, ever a clumsy speaker, could not compete even had he desired to do so. His own weapon was the pen of the journalist and propagandist, at a moment when the press was gaining force, but when it was the spoken word that swayed the warring factions who came to dominate the scene in a struggle for power—to the death.

The sheer impetus of the revolutionary process, once it had started on its headlong path, took by surprise those who had realised neither the full consequences of their own commitment, nor the likely reactions of their fellow-countrymen who engaged in counter-revolution and war. At various stages, some wished to stop this revolutionary process. Condorcet, ever impatient, was not one of those who thought that the revolution was over in 1789-90. Though disappointed in his failure to be elected to the States-General in the spring of 1789, he had been chosen to serve on the (increasingly powerful) Paris Commune in September of that year. In the beginning, he had largely exerted influence through his friends in the Constituent Assembly—Mirabeau, La Fayette, Sieyès—and through his writings.

What really moved Condorcet towards a more committed revolutionary stance was the abortive flight of the King and the royal family, and their capture at Varennes in June 1791. In Condorcet's view, Louis XVI had violated his oath to uphold the Constitution, and was intending to return at the head of an armed force to suppress the revolution. This crime released Condorcet from his own oath to uphold the monarchy.

As an admirer and supporter of the American example, he had long believed that a republican system was the ideal. With his friend Thomas Paine, he founded the "Republican Society", though it won few supporters, for Condorcet's activity was in advance of the moment. (Robespierre did not favour a republic at that time.) Condorcet delivered a notable address entitled *On the Republic, or is a King essential for establishing liberty?*. He founded a paper, *Le Républicain*, where he published a sardonic anti-monarchical satire, proposing the substitution of a robot for the King as being less expensive. The royalists would never forget this insult to the monarch, and were henceforward to be found slandering Condorcet's character and morals and those of his wife in the monarchist press.

In an attempt to silence republicanism once and for all, the National Guard under the command of La Fayette fired upon a few demonstrators in the Champ de Mars. A number of people were killed. Among the strollers on that fine summer day was Condorcet's wife with their baby daughter. His indignation knew no bounds. That was the end of his friendship with La Fayette, as well as with distinguished liberal-minded noblemen like Montmorency and La Rochefoucauld, alongside whom he had fought for human rights and the abolition of privilege in the early flush of lyrical enthusiasm.

THE HOUR OF Condorcet's period in power had arrived. Elected to the new Legislative Assembly in September 1791, with the support of his friend Brissot and associates—the "Brissotins" or "Girondins", as they became familiarly known—"the last of the *philosophes*" was to figure in turn as its secretary, vice-president, and president. In addition, he edited and contributed to *La Chronique de Paris*, giving an account of daily debates in the Chamber. He laboured on measures to remedy the country's dire finances, proposed the establishment of savings and insurance funds to help "the poorest section of society", and composed his innovatory report on education, which was to be completely free and open to all, whatever their station, including women.

Soon, deep suspicions about secret negotiations between the French Court and foreign powers, together with the threat of invasion, gave force to the urgings of the war party, led by Brissot and his enthusiastic friends, who believed that war would lead to the end of the monarchy. "It was with hatred of war that I voted for it . . .", Condorcet would later declare, seeing war as the sole means of foiling the conspiracy of the Court.[19] None the less, his vote was a notable departure from his principles.

One who stood out then against the war party was Robespierre, whose mouthpiece, the former Capuchin friar, Chabot, loudly denounced Condorcet. In response, Condorcet went so far as to suggest repeatedly that Robespierre and his associates were in the pay of the Court. To accuse the Incorruptible of corruption was the last insult as well as an act of folly. It shows how far Condorcet himself, the advocate of calm reasonableness, had been swept away by the current of political passion, and how—in accordance with Michelet's perception—his impassioned sensibility could turn to fury.

When Brissot defended Condorcet (then ill and absent),

[18] Condorcet, *Le Veritable et le Faux Ami du Peuple* (1790-91), *Oeuvres*, vol. I, pp. 529-33.
[19] Condorcet, *Fragment de Justification*, *Oeuvres*, vol. I, p. 591.

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as a man who had fought nobly alongside Voltaire and D'Alembert, Robespierre was not impressed. In one of his celebrated speeches of self-justification and emotional blackmail, he attacked the *philosophes*, claiming that they had relentlessly persecuted "virtue and the spirit of liberty" in the person of the true philosopher, Rousseau. Robespierre even blamed Condorcet and Brissot, with "their friend" La Fayette, for the bloodshed on the Champ de Mars the previous July, though he deigned with seeming generosity to regard them as men who displayed political ineptitude rather than positive ill will.

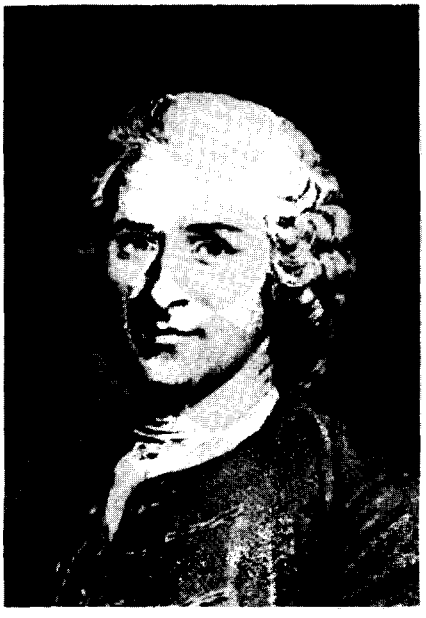
A GRAVER TEST of Condorcet's hitherto reformist principles was at hand. Ironically, "the second revolution", that of 10 August 1792—the popular uprising which brought about the advent of the National Convention, the imprisonment of Louis XVI and his family, the birth of the First Republic—found an eloquent apologist in Condorcet, the advocate of respect for law. On no account should his friend Lord Stanhope see the events of 10 August "as the result of a plot, or as that of a simple popular revolt. For many months I had seen no other way to preserve liberty and with it order established under the Constitution." This was because the Legislative Assembly had signally failed to show its strength, wasting time in "*subtilités constitutionnelles*"; and he observed significantly: ". . . the people wanted to save itself", since the "party of liberty" had neither the will nor the means to bring about a policy that would have the same results as the insurrection of 10 August.[20]

In the section of his incomplete *Justification* concerned with this crisis, and penned while its author was in hiding, Condorcet spoke of being "forced" to take "extraordinary measures", of "necessity" compelling us, the legislators, to "exceed the limits of our ordinary functions". He went on to praise the moderation of the people. In a short time, he had indeed travelled far from his essay *Le Véritable et le Faux Ami du Peuple*, with its scathing denunciation of honey-tongued Démagoras who was always on the side of the people, when it manifested its will outside properly elected assemblies by rioting in the streets. Condorcet had ceased to stand with Philodème, who never failed to reprove the people for any misconduct. The fact was that he now wanted urgently the same aims (the fall of Louis XVI, the Republic) as the instigators of the revolution of 10 August.

Those who profited by the insurrection were Danton, and Robespierre (who kept out of the way during the upheaval). Like so many intellectuals who came after, obsessed by action and men of action, Condorcet admired Danton, the strong man of the hour, the "necessary" political leader in time of crisis. Moreover, he was to pen an extraordinary defence of that dominating if equivocal man of action, in which expressions of necessity are repeated many times. "I have been reproved for voting for Danton to be Minister of Justice", declared Condorcet, giving reasons why such a man, trusted by the people who had overturned the throne, was needed. As he explained: ". . . in the ministry there was need for a man who, by his personal ascendancy, could control the extremely contemptible instruments of a useful, glorious and necessary revolution. . . ." There spoke Condorcet the aristocrat who scorned the mob. He added:

> ". . . it was necessary that this man, by his gift for eloquence, by his wit, by his character, should not debase the ministry or the members of the National Assembly who would have to negotiate with him. Danton alone had such qualities. I chose him and I have no regrets. Perhaps he exaggerated the maxims of popular constitutions, in displaying too great a deference for the notions of the

[20] Condorcet, *Lettre à un jeune Français qui se trouvait à Londres* (1792), *Oeuvres*, vol. I, p. 335.



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> people. . . . But the principle of acting solely with the people and through it, by controlling it, is the only one which can save the laws in a time of popular revolution; and all parties which detach themselves from the people will end by destroying themselves, and possibly the people as well. Besides, Danton possesses that rare quality lacking in ordinary men: he neither hates nor fears enlightenment, talent or virtue."[21]

It looks as if Danton had successfully flattered "the last of the *philosophes*", whatever lingering doubt that luminary might retain about the politician's deference for the mob. Apparently, Philodème ends by embracing Démagoras in a dramatic scene of lofty Cornelian magnanimity.

During the sinister September massacres, whose victims included common law prisoners and prostitutes as well as priests and nobles, Condorcet did not speak out in horror on behalf of the victims, nor did he demand respect for law, as Philodème would have done. In terms similar to those of Roland and others, he wrote: "We draw a veil over events . . . unfortunate and dreadful situation where the character of a naturally good and magnanimous people is constrained to give vent to such acts of vengeance." Nameless fears of a counter-revolutionary plot were rife, and there was imminent threat of invasion and dread of defeat. If Condorcet had immediately denounced the massacres which supposedly aimed to eliminate counter-revolutionary plotters, would he have appeared to be sympathetic to such a plot?

It was only after the massacres had come to an end that Condorcet condemned "these dark and aimless crimes". Later, when writing his *Justification*, he could declare: "The massacres of 2 September, the consequence of the savagery and madness of a few men, have stained this revolution."[22] Yet he added pointedly that these massacres were not the work of the people. On the contrary, they were due to a small number of agitators and murderers, chief among whom was "the infamous, crazed Marat", ever ready to incite to murder, who had never spared the *philosophe*, his wife, or his friends.

Thus publicly the reputation of "the people" and the notion of its intrinsic goodness were saved by Condorcet's tortured casuistry. Privately, according to Amélie Suard, the ghastly murder of his estranged friend, the Duc de La Rochefoucauld—whose mangled corpse was thrown in front of his wife and aged mother, the Duchesse d'Enville—deeply affected the *philosophe*. He had tried, in vain, to save the life of La Rochefoucauld's nephew.

At last, however, Condorcet had what he wanted, though neither by his original principles nor with consequences he could have foreseen. The verbal war between the factions intensified. He began to draw away from the Girondins. Indeed, he belonged to no particular party. He gives the impression of not knowing quite where he was, as he continued preaching peace and calm to men who had no inclination to listen.

At the same time, he grappled rashly with powerful and implacable enemies: with Marat, whose "abominable maxims", he said, had nothing to do with the great original revolution "begun by Reason"; with Robespierre who (so Condorcet suggested) had been in hiding during the glorious and spontaneous revolution of 10 August. The Incorruptible would credit Condorcet with an article in *La Chronique de Paris*: there, Robespierre was denounced as the leader of a sect, who "has made for himself a reputation for austerity bordering on sainthood", and who disappears in time of danger. If Condorcet was the author of this polemic, it—together with his other personal attacks on opponents—scarcely coincided with his public pronouncements as peacemaker.

THE TRIAL OF Louis XVI brought him once again into conflict with Robespierre, who saw the execution of the monarch as expedient, a measure of public safety. Condorcet had long been opposed to the death penalty. Writing to a lawyer many years before, in 1775, about the cruel sentence passed on the Chevalier de La Barre, Condorcet had passionately proclaimed his principles:

> "Does the *Parlement* believe it has the right to condemn to death anyone it pleases? The law alone, and only a law that is clear and precise, can authorise one citizen to pronounce the death of another and, in any other case, whoever does so is guilty of murder."[23]

Now, certainly, Condorcet declared that the National Convention could not be legislator, prosecutor and judge. He denounced Robespierre's "*maximes stupides et féroces*". None the less, he voted with those who held that Louis XVI was guilty, for if the King were innocent, then the glorious revolution of 10 August would be a crime, and the Convention itself illegal.

At the same time, Condorcet thought there should be no final decision on the King's fate until the Constitution, which he was engaged in drafting, should be promulgated. As for himself, since the death penalty went against his principles, he would prefer the King to be condemned to the gravest punishment short of death, such as penal servitude for life. Grandly, or blindly, he could even propose that the Convention, which had voted for the King's death, should really be giving proof of its humanity by voting on such urgent matters as education, the removal of the stigma of illegitimacy, and the relief of the poor and needy.

His role in the formulation of the Constitution of 1793, the so-called "*constitution girondine*", was pre-eminent. The new republican Declaration of Rights included the right to equality, education, help for the sick and aged. The death penalty was to be abolished, except—notable proviso—for crimes against the State. Condorcet worked devotedly on this Constitution for many months: he saw it as the culmination of his career and of his work towards the creation and safeguarding of a better society.

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[21] Condorcet, *Fragment de Justification*, *Oeuvres*, vol. I, pp. 602-603.

[22] *Chronique de Paris*, 4 and 9 September 1792, quoted by Badinter, *Condorcet*, p. 475. Condorcet, *Fragment de Justification*, *Oeuvres*, vol. I, pp. 603-604.

[23] Condorcet, Letter to M. Target, avocat au Parlement, April 1775, *Oeuvres*, vol. I, p. 294; *Opinion sur le Jugement de Louis XVI*, *Oeuvres*, vol. XII, p. 288.

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MEANWHILE, BITTER BATTLES raged on between Girondins and Montagnards. The Paris sections were in uproar and revolt by the end of May 1793. On the night of June 1st to 2nd, the National Convention was surrounded and, under duress, a rump decreed the arrest of Girondin *députés*. It is not known whether Condorcet was present. His name did not figure on the list of his Girondin friends—he had tried to preserve his independence from them since the autumn of 1792, and had on occasion voted with the Montagnards. He expressed approval of the policy of the Convention and of the Committee of Public Safety after the events of June 2nd.[24] Just before that day, in the midst of the crisis, he wrote an important article entitled *Sur le sens du mot révolutionnaire*, published in the new *Journal d'instruction sociale* which he had created with Sieyès. This shows how far he was now prepared to go in justifying expediency, while still ostensibly standing by his earlier liberal principles.

The essay also demonstrates his doubts and his confusion. It is an attempt to define the word "revolutionary" (to be applied only in connection with revolutions that have liberty as their aim), in order to stem the abuse of it. What do people mean when they say a revolutionary law is necessary? he inquires. Do they mean a violent, extraordinary measure, contrary to the normal principles of justice? If so, that is not enough: it must be proved that the measure is "useful, and that circumstances demand it and justify it". The tendency to accept as necessary what cannot be proved just is "convenient but dangerous". At a time when the revolution is "settled but not concluded", the forces of "counter-revolution" gather, and they have to be stopped even if this means the promulgation of repressive laws. But such laws must be confined within "limits"; they should be "temporary". Revolutionary measures are "laws of safety, not of violence", he insists.

Condorcet urges his fellows not to justify all excesses by "necessity, the excuse of tyrants". Yet, at the same time, he exculpates "the friends of liberty" who promulgate laws under the pressure of such extraordinary circumstances: "If zeal, even for the most just of causes, sometimes becomes guilty, let us remember also that moderation is not always wisdom." That surely is a serious confession for the liberal-humanitarian evolutionist of former years. And he added:

> "Let us make *revolutionary* laws, but only to hasten the moment when we shall no longer have need of them. Let us adopt *revolutionary* measures, not to prolong the revolution or stain it with blood, but to complete it and hasten its end."[25]

Condorcet, in his turn, had thus reached the stage when he wished for the end of the Revolution. Yet what twists and turns there are here: warnings, condemnations, exculpations. His readers must have wondered where he stood. Now he sounds like King Canute, trying to hold back the sea of blood; now like one who is justifying excesses so long as they are temporary ones.

The moment of Condorcet's downfall was approaching. To his dismay, the Constitution on which he had laboured so lovingly and so long was cast aside. In its place, the Constitution known as "*la jacobine*" was rushed through in just over a week. He had lost not only prestige but power to influence his country's future.

CONDORCET was outraged. He gave vent to his fury in a scathing article, published anonymously. The new Constitution was promulgated under duress, he cried, when freedom of the press had been abolished, and when there was no liberty either inside or outside the Assembly. Such crimes had actually gone unpunished. Above all, contrary to Condorcet's deepest belief, "*la jacobine*" offered no prospect of periodic reform. This new Constitution had been passed "to ensure the power of a single party".[26] It would lead to the enthronement of a new monarch.

Robespierre took the hint: Chabot, acting doubtless as his instrument, denounced Condorcet on 8 July 1793, and demanded his immediate arrest.

> *"Men with a system possess a method of allurement that they certainly know how to use. They always look as if they are concerned with the interests of humanity. . . . But the fact is that humanity suits their purely speculative notions. . . ."*
>
> **Jacques Necker,** DE LA RÉVOLUTION FRANÇAISE

CONDORCET FLED, taking refuge in the house of the admirable Mme Vernet, a widow related by marriage to the distinguished family of painters. But his rage was such that he could not be ruled by elementary prudence to keep silent. In a proud letter to the National Convention, he denounced the tyranny under which it was suffering. Since it was not free, its laws were not binding. He declined to justify himself: "I shall not lower myself to compose an apology for my principles or my conduct; I have no need of it, either for France or Europe." This time, Condorcet actually named Robespierre as his persecutor, as one who, in 1791—unlike himself—had not proved to be a true republican. As for "your Committee of Public Safety", it consisted of men chosen from among you because they were "docile slaves".[27] Such words were not likely to be forgotten.

Hidden in Mme Vernet's house for months, Condorcet began to write his *Justification*, the apology he had loftily declined to submit to the Convention, for his wife, daughter, friends—for posterity. He did not want "the friends of liberty" to be discouraged by the example of the injustices he himself, the true patriot, had suffered. He examined his beliefs and conduct, breaking off when he reached the September massacres, presumably because he was dissatisfied and because this apology was not doing anything to rescue him from grief and despair. His wife urged him to work on his *magnum opus*, *Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des Pro-*

[24] Léon Cahen, *Condorcet et la Révolution Française* (1904), pp. 518-21.
[25] Condorcet, *Sur le sens du mot révolutionnaire* (1 June 1793), *Oeuvres*, vol. XII, pp. 617-23.
[26] Condorcet, *Aux Citoyens Français sur la Nouvelle Constitution*, *Oeuvres*, vol. XII, pp. 653-75.
[27] Condorcet, *Lettre à la Convention Nationale*, *Oeuvres*, vol. XII, pp. 683-84.

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grès de l'Esprit Humain, whose plan he had already sketched in his mind. It would remain incomplete.

With its sustained lofty tone, it is certainly one of the most extraordinary works to be composed in such dire circumstances, under the daily threat of discovery and death. Condorcet plainly has no illusions about the Robespierrist dictatorship, about those he calls "*charlatans de patriotisme*", who employ "hypocritical and vague pretexts" of public safety and necessity; who are marked out by their ferocity and their indifference to human life; who have emptied the word "virtue" of all meaning. Nevertheless, he continues to proclaim his faith that reason, education, learning, talent, will achieve the eventual moral improvement of humankind in general. Thus, he prophesied hopefully, man would be led by truth, "although subject to error"; ruled by morality, "although sometimes swept away into crime"; humane, "although still inclined to be led astray by private passions"; happy, "in so far as it is permitted to be so in the midst of the sufferings, needs and losses which for him are the necessary course of the general laws of the universe."

EVIDENTLY Condorcet, fully aware of the human condition, *willed* his transfiguration of humankind in the face of personal experience, sufferings, doubts. This touching picture of man transformed into a reasoning, reasonable, humane being as distinct from man as he really is and behaves, provided the great consolation. He knew it, and defiantly insisted upon it, in the face of his enemies, the political fanatics:

> "How this picture of humankind, freed from all its chains, removed from the rule of chance, as from that of the enemies of its progress, and marching forward with firmness and certainty on the road of truth, virtue and happiness, offers the philosopher a vision which consoles him for the delusions, crimes, injustices with which the earth is still sullied and whose victim he often is! . . . For him this contemplation is a refuge where the memory of his persecutors cannot reach him; where, living in thought with man restored to his rights as to the dignity of his nature, he forgets the person whom greed, fear or envy torment and corrupt; it is there that he truly lives with his fellows, *in an elysium which his reason has learned how to create for itself*, and which his love of humanity beautifies with the purest delights."[28]

The noble vision of that consoling elysium and the grand march towards it have sustained and misled generations of his conscious and unconscious disciples.

Take the *idéologue* Daunou, who lived to be a liberal *député* under the Restoration: did he really think that the proscribed *philosophe*, still enthusiastic about the Revolution, regarded his fate as "one of those private misfortunes almost unavoidable during great movements towards general happiness"? Under the *Directoire* (in 1795, not long after Condorcet's death), it was Daunou who proposed the distribution of 3,000 copies of the posthumously published *Esquisse* among the *députés* and the schools of the Republic.

That work became the bible of the *idéologues* who survived the Terror (Cabanis, Destutt de Tracy, Rœderer). It inspired not only liberals but also utopian socialists like Saint-Simon, positivists like Comte, and their respective followers, together with countless others in the 19th century and after who have pursued the quest for "the new man" and the dream of a rational scientific paradise—one which has all too frequently foundered in blood.

CONDORCET'S END was miserable. By a new decree of 13 March 1794, all "enemies of the Republic" were to be outlawed and, when found, executed without trial. Anyone giving them shelter would be regarded as their accomplice. Eluding the kindly vigilance of his protectress, Mme Vernet, Condorcet took to the road. Weakened by ill-health, he wandered about in the March chill, seeking help—in vain—at the country home of his former friends, Amélie Suard and her husband. At last, at Clamart, the weary idealist entered the inn. He was asked how many eggs he wanted in his omelette. How should the lofty *philosophe* know that by asking for twelve eggs he at once confirmed the worst suspicions? He was carted off to prison in Bourg-Egalité (Bourg-la-Reine), where he was found dead in his cell on 29 March 1794. The site of his grave is unknown.

Condorcet's latest biographers favour the hypothesis of death by natural causes, but are disinclined to lay stress on the manner of his demise. If his friend Cabanis gave him a ring containing poison—he apparently made a similar gift to others, including Bonaparte—how is it that this ring was not listed among Condorcet's effects, along with his silver watch, his ivory-handled razor, his copy of Horace? The fact is that suicide is necessary to the legend. Myths rarely gather around those who die of cerebral haemorrhage.

Condorcet's life is as much of an enigma as his death. Was he the innocent lost among the wolves? Did he realise that he had changed, that some of his principles had grown tarnished in the glare of the public arena and in contact with terrible events? Was he not a self-deceiver, blinded by pride, passion and impatience? If he had kept quiet and waited for Thermidor, like Sieyès, who notoriously survived to be ennobled by Napoleon, or indeed, if he had thought more about his wife and daughter *before* he was proscribed, he might have lived on.

"I have said farewell to *la gloire*", he wrote in a moment of despair. "What madness it is to wish to live in future ages and to live not at all the life of the present day as it flows rapidly past!"[29] Dramatically if erroneously, he saw himself, on the brink of death, in the role of Socrates—or in that of the 17th-century republican, Algernon Sidney, who was beheaded—as a martyr in the cause of liberty, a patriot above party.

Not exactly a liberal democrat, Condorcet was a revolutionary out of his depth. The times were out of joint; and he was the noble figure marred and destroyed by the tragic flaw of hubris.

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[28] Condorcet, *Esquisse d'un Tableau Historique des Progrès de l'Esprit Humain*, *Oeuvres*, vol. 6, pp. 556-57, 595, 275-76. Italics added.

[29] Condorcet, manuscript quoted by Badinter, *Condorcet*, p. 398; *Fragment de Justification*, *Oeuvres*, vol. 1, p. 608. Compare Jean-Denis Bredin, *Sieyès* (1988), pp. 281, 306.

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NOTES & TOPICS

Returning the Bust of Immanuel Kant

Journey to Koenigsberg—By MARION DÖNHOFF

IT IS NOT an unfamiliar predicament, and every East-West traveller over the years has experienced it: not knowing until the day before departure whether the needed visa will ever turn up. This time I required a rather special permission: for a German (and a former East Prussian at that) to visit the "closed military zone" in which Kaliningrad, formerly Koenigsberg, is located. The Soviet Embassy explained that my passport had been approved for Moscow but not (as yet) for *"das militärische Sperrgebiet"*. The usual chain of errors, misunderstanding, postal re-routings and diplomatic dithering was, in the end, broken with a last-minute delivery of transit stamps and provisional permissions. And so I began my curious mission.

It was inspired by a book and a film on the subject of "Kaliningrad Today", and the authors noted that since 1945 no Western automobile had been sighted on East Prussian roads and streets. Normally the whole Soviet area, which had been formerly a part of the German *Reich*, is hermetically sealed off. My own special interest—not at all invasive—was the break-through of being the first motorised tourist in that corner of the Eastern world.

The sense of my "mission" had began curiously in the last year of the War. I received at that time of great danger and destruction a telephone call from the Director of the Koenigsberg museums. He asked whether he could deposit with me (I was then living in nearby Friedrichstein, an estate belonging to my family) the famous *Kant-Denkmal*—the bust of the philosopher Immanuel Kant made by Christian-Daniel Rauch, for there was much concern that it could be bombed out of existence in the city of Koenigsberg. In the park amidst a cluster of large trees the great philosopher, I thought, could continue his quiet, if monumental, existence.

Some years later I was told by a Russian official that the statue was not to be found. I made a few extra sketches of the exact place, with X marking the spot; and added also a few lines of reference to the nearby ditches: possibly some Red Army ideologue, supposing that the German in question was a hateful *Junker* class-enemy, had proceeded to "bury" him. My guidance did not help. Kant was gone.

It is not that I felt any guilt about the disappearance, but I confess I was upset about it, and the matter gnawed at me for a long time to come. I thought of trying to find out whether a clay casting-mould for the Kant statue could possibly be located in the post-War German chaos. The former Director of "the Castles and Gardens of the *Reich*", Martin Sperlich, offered to help, and proceeded to write to all his old colleagues, including those in Eastern Germany. The inquiry was not exactly crowned with the success I had hoped for, but it did turn up an important detail. In Berlin itself, somewhere in the famed Charlottenburg *Gipsformerei*, there was in fact another work from the hand of Rauch—a smaller version of the old Koenigsberg monument. It was almost identical with the original, but not "life-size": only 60 centimetres (roughly a foot-and-a-half) high. I happened to have some ready cash, having been awarded a literary prize by the city of Düsseldorf, and a bronze copy of the mini-Kant was ordered so that it could be transported to a Kant-less Koenigsberg.

MY KILOMETRE count on the little *Ente* car which carried Kant on its back seat, read 35,626. In the old days I had often driven the route—some 600 km, and thus easily done in a day at the wheel. But the Soviets did not allow the "closed area" to be approached from the West at all, and we were prescribed an Eastern approach via Warsaw, Brest, and Vilna. It took us two days; the kilometre reading was 37,350; thus we drove 1,725 rather than the "normal" 600 km. Still, we rather enjoyed the sights on our zigzag and roundabout course through north-eastern Europe. . . . the Soviet border at Brest, the treeless roads of the Polish plain, the low wooden houses (coloured window-frames, brightly painted doors) of Lithuania and White Russia, gardens of sunflowers and geraniums: and all the time we caught sight

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of only a handful of Western licence-plates. I saw scenes which were vague in fading memories: lone walkers along endless country roads; mothers in villages taking their children by the hand as we passed; a farmer pulling his two cows behind him; cows "parked" on a street near a shop.

And then, suddenly, when the sun was already low in the sky, we drove towards a road-sign that electrified me—"Wirballen", the only place-name on our whole journey that has its old form. It was the border-crossing in the old days between East Prussia and Lithuania. There begin the splendid *Alleen* lined by thick black tree-trunks whose proliferating foliage rises and joins together as in some cathedral nave. There are ancient linden trees, every now and then mighty oaks and ashes, and then a splendid mile of birches. For a while, time seemed to have halted. Everything in sight appeared as it once was: coming home. . . everything in its place. The twilight contributed to the confounding of reality and remembrance. (In the bright morning light, coming back, everything looked rather different, the villages poor and depressed, the fields unattended. . . .)

AT ELEVEN IN THE EVENING we were approaching Kaliningrad. Elongated lamp-posts illuminated the wide streets, and new eight- and ten-storey apartment houses showed their usual concrete balconies. There was no temptation here to lose oneself in remembrance of things past. We looked for our hotel, and some singing and shouting youngsters, apparently celebrating a wedding, told us where the "Kaliningrad" was located, waving, pointing. In the hotel the communication was similar, with gestures, smiles, and embarrassed laughter, as we tried to discover whether Yuri Ivanov (the director of the "*Kulturfond Koenigsberg*"), with whom I had been corresponding, had actually received the telegram I had sent requesting lodgings. After some attempts at futile non-communication we deciphered a message that we were to be quartered in a house—Kutusova 7. Where was this? It was rather far. I ordered a taxi to lead the way, and when we arrived the taxi driver refused to accept a tip, but took two packets of Marlboro.

No 7 is evidently a very special housing arrangement, an old *Bürgerhaus* with elaborate decorations in the style of 1910: boxed ceilings, a staircase of darkly polished wood with special inlays, white curtains on all the windows. My room was large and comfortable. The house had belonged to a prosperous merchant named Makovsky who lived on this street, which used to be called Körteallee, in the district of Amalienau. Most of what little has survived is in this sector of the city (and in Maraunenhof). The old villas look exactly like similar upper-middle-class suburbs in Hamburg, Munich, or Berlin (Dahlem, Zehlendorf); but here they serve as kindergartens or are partitioned into small flats.

The city of old Koenigsberg was utterly destroyed in World War II—only some 6% of the buildings remained standing. The classical 19th-century City Hall survived, but the *Dom* constitutes an impressive ruin on its isle; and one can make out some of the old harbour forts. But if I were to be dropped by parachute into these streets, the convincing answer to the question of where-in-the-world-have-I-landed would be: Irkutsk.

Nothing, but nothing at all, would evoke a memory of Koenigsberg as it used to be. Walking through the city, I could find no street-corner at which I could conceivably be moved to say, "This was the Paradeplatz" or "Here was the *Schloss*". It is as if a medieval canvas were completely overpainted, and nobody could know whether underneath another landscape or rather city-scape would be discovered. Certainly none of the 400,000 Russians who live here today has any notion of yesterday's Hanseatic town. There is one German still living in the city, a writer called Jacquemin who had emigrated to the USSR in 1933, married a Russian, and returned to. . . Kaliningrad. There is also a handful of Volga-German families who have moved from Kazakhstan.

To reconstruct an absolutely devastated city, clearing the ruins, restoring the sewage system, rebuilding utilities for water and electricity, has been an impressive achievement. Today it is a huge metropolis, not exactly beautiful by any standard of urban aesthetics, and especially marred by the host of war monuments, peace memorials, and victory statuary which the Soviet Establishment finds so compulsory. The entire urban complex is towered over by one of the ugliest buildings I have seen anywhere: the House of the Soviet. But one is grateful for small favours: the grass still grows green, and the lovely lakes shimmer with water.

I was here at the outset of the destruction. There was, I remember, severe damage from a heavy RAF bombardment in the autumn of 1944, which left little of the long row of warehouses along the waterfront. Out of the ruins in more recent days the Russians have shown a touching concern for "modern industrial archaeology"; collectors on neighbourhood digs even turn up items of German sentimentality, and thus I was given a piece of tile that had been found in Friedrichstein. . . where I used to live.

FRIEDRICHSTEIN, only twenty kilometres to the east, was my *Heimat*. In a time when so much was counterfeit and values like "homeland" and "patriotism" were being manipulated, when such emotions and loyalties were abused to legitimate hatred and contempt for all things foreign, when the very notion of humanity was defamed and tolerance was pronounced to be a weakness of "rootless intellectuals" or "*heimatlose Cosmopoliten*", I was obliged to reduce my feelings to embrace only my East Prussian locale. Home was Friedrichstein, and not Germany.

Now it was only half-an-hour away. Did I dare pay a visit, or should one's *Heimat* be left on the old maps of memory? I was in a quandary; and then the attraction overcame the hesitations. We drove out. As we passed through Löwenhagen and turned left towards Friedrichstein, I was holding my breath. Would the *Allee* still be there? It was. Of course, some of the old erect "sentinels" had fallen by the wayside—small wonder, since it was in the year 1747 that an ancestor had first planted the oldest trees.

To the right, the pond had been defeated by the weeds; and the nearby gravestones in the cemetery had been levelled. But the lake down from the Hohlweg had its legendary dream-like aspect, framed by a landscape dark in the failing autumnal light. The eye moves on. . . and what it doesn't

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see is incredible. The large, rambling castle is gone, as if swallowed up by the earth, leaving nothing, not even a sign of a ruin. We had to search for quite a while before we found the ground on which it stood. Nothing is to be seen of the greensward, the hedges, the paths. The old windmill, gone—the long barn with the horse-stalls, also gone. Everything was grown over with shrubs, brambles, trees, as if civilisation had been taken over by the forest primeval.

Of the buildings on the farm somewhat lower down a few were still standing: the barn for the farm wagons, the old brew-house, the little cottage of the woman who sold eggs; and on the gable under that roof used to hang the bell whose long rope the foreman would tug at to summon the farm labourers to work. Rope and bell are long since gone, but the gaping wooden box which was supposed to protect them still hangs there, quite intact. How absurd—a great stone castle disappears without trace, and a useless clapboard contraption survives.

BUT BACK TO Immanuel Kant. Evidently he is still being honoured in his "home town". (Schiller too; I saw his statue, and was told that students gather in front of it once a year to recite his poetry.) My Russian friend Yuri Ivanov says generously that "Kant does not belong to the Russians. . . nor to the Germans. . . but to all mankind!"

Accordingly, the Mayor gives us a reception at the City Hall and on the coffee-table stands our bust of Kant, transported like a true cosmopolitan over many frontiers. We talk of history, and the future, and of the likeness which Rauch made of the Koenigsberg philosopher. Also of the reports that the area might become a free-trade zone in which new concepts such as "joint ventures" would be given an experimental start. Something venturesome is surely needed in the harbour where, although it still has some fifteen kilometres of quayside, not a single Western ship has been in half-a-century. I am told that a mere five million tons go through the classic port in a full year's time.

Would they let us back along a different route, not the cumbersome circuitous journey we were forced into making, outward bound? Our hosts wanted to save us the 1,000 kilometres, and telephoned to Moscow, to some General or other, but to no avail. So, with our little car on the road again, we tried to speed along the endless Eastern roads which had still managed to unite old Kant with his native soil. We reached the Soviet-Polish border in the early evening, and took our place in the queue—the 40th car on a waiting list which it was estimated would take, roughly, four hours to process.

The Poles are used to this sort of thing. They get out of their cars, smoke, gossip, and look quite at ease—after all, the Russians could easily open up two extra roads across the frontier to comradely Poland, but everyone here appears to be inured to such "brotherly chicanery". The next day would be even worse, waiting in even more tiresome queues for *Benzin* when there is no *Benzin* and no hope of being "processed" before the long-postponed deliveries to the petrol stations arrive.

I wait with the others, at the frontier, at the stations, and think back on the journey. It was, I suspect, a quest for *Heimat*, my own probably more than Immanuel Kant's: a journey to find Friedrichstein. When I set out it was, to all intents and purposes, a piece of reality, far away, and even unreachable, but for all that *existent*. Coming back, I sense that it is now an unreal fragment in a dream-world; and there it suits my life and longings even better.

Revolution in the British Library

By Vincent Brome

LIVING IN EXILE in London, a one-time Italian revolutionary—Antonio Panizzi—had a vision which encompassed the creation of a library open to scholars from all over the world, untrammelled by cost. In founding the British Library, he realised his vision, and for nineteen years, between 1837 and 1856, became its first Keeper of Printed Books. Today Kenneth Cooper also has a vision, which equally embraces world scholarship but is very different from Panizzi's and subject to financial stringencies. In modern terminology, Kenneth Cooper became the Chief Executive of the new British Library in 1984, and there flowed from that description a flood of activities which would have astonished its founder.

From the embryonic shell of steel and concrete next to the Gothic towers of St Pancras Station, a clear image of the new, streamlined library is emerging. The beautiful Reading Room in Bloomsbury and its scattered satellites will give place to a library capable of assimilating most of the nineteen out-housed departments which at the moment delay deliveries and undermine preservation. Where, before, scholars completed handwritten forms in triplicate which might produce a book at their desk two hours or even three days later, in future they will tap the book's code into a terminal designed to make minimal demands on expertise. Instead of waiting for the handwritten slip to be returned saying "In Use to Another Reader", or "At the Binders", which necessitates a complete recapitulation of the application process, the computer will flash that message instantly on to the screen. If the book is available, the request will be flashed electronically to a distribution point connected with the bookstore, a vast catacomb which plunges 80 feet below ground level. Such is the sensitivity of the messages that they will select the right floor and section of the multi-layered bookstore, and an assistant will mount an electrically driven trolley to reach the section in a few minutes. The whole process of programming the computer terminal near the reader's desk and delivering the book should take less than half-an-hour.

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So much for the ideal envisaged by the administration. Our Royal iconoclast, the Prince of Wales, wasted no time in launching an attack on the embryonic building which was to enshrine the vision, describing it as "an Assembly Hall for a Secret Police". Certainly an artist's overall view of the new Library's completed form, juxtaposed with the delicate tracery of the old St Pancras Station which adjoins it, left an unfortunate impression; but it is out of the question to model the new building on Victorian St Pancras, for reasons which are self-evident. Divorced from the architecture of another age, St John Wilson's design has a wide piazza (suitable for public functions), terraced levels, a variegated profile, and a general cohesion of design which makes it more aesthetically acceptable than many another modern building.

Far be it for me to meddle in architectural subtleties, but an old-fashioned and deliberately ornate fountain at the centre of the piazza would relieve the general austerity and provide a link with the past. Unrealised detail may be very innovative. A wrought-iron gate has been commissioned from the surrealist artist Eduardo Paolozzi and the interior may include a huge tapestry by the painter R. B. Kitaj. The whole structure is to be given the warmth of a brick facing.

Not only the building but the administrators too have become the target of a number of scholars who bitterly opposed the move from Great Russell Street. The "Secret Police" remark had unfortunate echoes. Rumour has it that a handful of administrators were replacing the old Keepers in order to create a spanking new image of an up-to-date library purely for their own comfort and satisfaction. But the facts are inescapable. Out-housing in nineteen different venues creates transport damage to books, labour-intensive handling multiplies these hazards, lack of controlled atmosphere encourages decay, and 50,000 new books pouring into the Library every year has burst its seams. Many of these disadvantages will disappear in the new Library rapidly taking shape on the Euston Road.

I AM SECOND TO NONE in my admiration for the old-world luxury of the existing Reading Room in Bloomsbury. No amount of cynicism can destroy the soaring inspiration of its dome, which is only two feet short of St Peter's and not far removed in beauty. Those who believe in the life of the mind regard it as a temple of reason which lifts the spirits simply on entering its sweeping symmetry. I am myself of this persuasion. Measure, then, my dismay at the enforced conclusion of an intellectual love affair which has produced multiple births (in my case, 30 books). The divorce is not by mutual consent. It is forced on one by the survival of the Library.

The difference between those who desired to relax in Bloomsbury's aesthetic surroundings, which were alleged to improve their scholarship, and those who work regularly under conditions which do not serve either efficiency or preservation was wide. Battle was joined, with no holds barred.

Hugh Thomas (Lord Thomas of Swynnerton) summoned his cohorts of dons, wrote a devastating analysis of the problem, and nearly won the day. Even now a whiff or two of grapeshot comes across the abandoned barricades, and his case still echoes on the air. It became a choice between satisfying the aesthetic sensibilities of a minority of scholars and preserving the unique heritage of the British Library not merely for the current generation but for 1,000 years.

THE PRESENT LIBRARY embraces 365 miles of shelving, 15,000,000 books, nineteen warehouses, and one complex at Boston Spa. These (with the exception of Boston Spa) will be brought under one roof in the new building, and this very centrality of resources offers great advantages. One serious qualification led to acrimonious exchanges behind the scenes between readers, administrators, and dons—and even reached the remote towers of the chairman, Lord Quinton. The whisper circulated that the Library was considering lending books to certain outside organisations and even to individuals.

This was bibliographical blasphemy. Letters and memos flew between the contestants. One American Professor arrived to find that a first edition of a rare Renaissance book had been loaned to someone in Australia; and that crystallised the argument. Scholars from all over the world came to the British Library because its unique collections encompass in one place original sources unobtainable elsewhere. Now, it seemed, they were being disseminated throughout the world. But that was a travesty of the facts. The book had indeed been loaned to an Australian university—for temporary exhibition purposes. In the fierce exchanges which developed, Professor Geoffrey Elton finally brought his searing prose to bear, and a policy emerged which seemed more satisfactory to all involved. British-published books would not be lent—except for exhibition purposes—while foreign publications in the collections would be available to libraries, universities, and similar institutions only as a last research resort.

The question arose: why break into such a unique collection and lend books at all? It seemed to undermine one of the sacred principles which justified the whole undertaking of building a new library—preservation. A simplified version of the complicated answer said that the collections must be made available to a wider readership, and earn money from ancillary services. Before the new policy operated, two copies of a book were required: one for Boston Spa (the lending section), and one which remained permanently available in Bloomsbury. Under the new policy, one copy only was obtained and could be borrowed direct from the main library, thus saving the cost of duplicate copies.

THIS ANSWER revealed the deeper drives underlying the new policies of the British Library, which are influenced if not controlled by Mrs Thatcher's cost-benefit analysis values. Today the Government has expectations that every grant made will be matched by increased returns from private enterprise. Lending books to increase income is a relatively dignified activity, but the pressure to earn money from ancillary services has reached a pitch which threatens to vulgarise aspects of literature and the arts. When it was estimated that 25% of the pre-1850 collection were in a sad state of disrepair the Library decided to launch

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an *"Adopt a Book"* campaign. By paying £200, anyone could save a book from disintegration. The price seemed exorbitant but that was the going rate of total rehabilitation of a book in disrepair. However, it is one thing to launch such a campaign and another to invoke the aid of those two well-known intellectuals, Roland Rat and Jeffrey Archer. The razzmatazz surrounding the launch, with the performance of these two gentlemen and posters showing a book with heads and legs walking—or was it running?—towards a newly refurbished life, brings back the vital question. How far can the arts go in raising private money without vulgarising the object preserved?

Four key personalities in the development of the new library—Kenneth Cooper (the Chief Executive), Michael Smethurst (the Director-General), St John Wilson (the Architect), and Andrew Phillips (Director of Public Services)—have come under pressure either to cut costs or to sell services. Charges for ancillary services have now increased to the point where no other comparable national library earns commercially a fifth of its total income. (One student asked ironically whether he should take out a second mortgage to cover the cost of his xeroxing.) Despite these efforts, grant-in-aid from the Government continues to fall in real terms.

Even the conception of the new Library, originally cast as it was in an Olympian mould, has suffered enforced erosion. Last year the grant to the Library's concluding building phase has been cut by 10% by the Treasury's imposition of Value Added Tax. Residual parts of the old railway warehouse site originally intended to be held against possible further development of the Library are under consideration for disposal, although the Library hopes to hold them for some years. By the end of 1989 St John Wilson had to demonstrate that the reworking of the old architectural design could be realised within the new financial limits.[1]

How will that affect the design of the new Reading Room? The short answer is not at all. Two adjacent split-level rectangular reading rooms—one general and one for rare books—will have 512 seats, which is more than their old equivalents. The actual floor space will be greater. The desks will not radiate out like the spokes of a wheel as at present, but will be varied, some parallel, some at angles. Already the design includes desks as spacious as those at Bloomsbury, but with hideous strip lighting replaced by lights individual to each reader, and all open to central shafts of natural light.

Meanwhile, revolutionary preservation techniques will employ the latest successes pioneered by a special research project at the University of Surrey which makes it possible to treat books *en masse*, strengthening the paper and neutralising acids. The technical jargon is formidable. Simplified, "graft polymerisation" is an elaborate process which purges the book with nitrogen to remove air and free oxygen. Exposed to a mixture of what are known as acrylic monomers, the books undergo irradiation with gamma rays which convert the monomers to polymers, thus strengthening the paper. The Surrey researchers have also discovered an alkaline to neutralise the acids in the paper. The combined effect of their work produces stronger, de-acidified books. David Clements, who directs the preservation, hopes to treat between 100,000 and 200,000 books a year—at under £6 per book, compared with previous methods costing £50 per book.

Traditionally, the old Library was almost a sanctuary for scholars—including eccentrics—where they could pursue pure research without necessarily having an end in view. Now the Government insists on the collections being more widely used and made available to practically-minded researchers whose lack of interest in abstract thinking is matched by their commitment to social concerns. This does not invade or damage the work of scholarship. It simply extends the range of readership.

Nothing at St Pancras can ever match the magnificence of its King's and Granville libraries (in the British Museum building) as exhibition galleries. In the new building a vision emerges of an elegant four-storey construction set like a brilliantly illuminated tower in the centre of the entrance hall, with exhibition halls open to the public, and matched by a piazza alive with people and events. It has yet to be seen how far this can be realised.

The image of the Library will undoubtedly change dramatically. It is now possible to put the whole of the *Oxford English Dictionary* on a small compact disc which will give innumerable print-outs. In some far-distant future, a library of discs might outrage the sensibilities of today's scholars but it does not in any way destroy the use of the old dictionary. A large part of the 19th-century collection is scheduled for microfilming but the revolution will not deny access to the original printed volumes. Scholars will still be able to summon up those beloved creations of board, paper and print which in their very ability to be handled communicate their contents as part of the lifeblood of scholarly work.

The gigantic undertaking of transporting 15,000,000 books to their new home at St Pancras will begin in July 1991 and finish in 1993, by which time the North Library and its unique collection of rare books will have been packaged and removed with processes equivalent to medical intensive care. There will follow an uneasy three-year period of double identity when the new North Library in St Pancras and the Reading Room in Bloomsbury will share books, with volumes passing between the two venues. The air, of course, will be thick with readers' complaints, but by 1996 the revolution will be complete.

There remains the question of the fate of the old Round Reading Room. Part of the polemic against the new Library includes the charge that the Room will be converted to philistine purposes. That is untrue. The Room is, of course, a Listed Building and the Trustees of the British Museum have agreed to preserve it as a Reading Room.

In all this ferment, does the image of a split-level, computerised new British Library so vulgarise Panizzi's original conception that he is turning in his grave? It is worth remembering that Panizzi was a revolutionary; he marched with the counter-forces of his day.

[1] The plans were originally drawn up in 1962; a revised brief was given ten years later.

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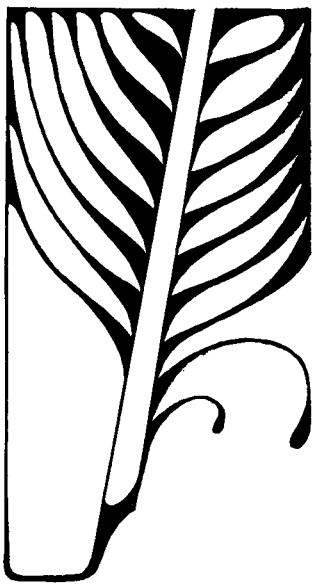
Of Ideals & Institutions

Diversity in Europe?—By VERNON BOGDANOR



"WHAT ELSE is Europe", asks the German poet Hans Magnus Enzensberger at the beginning of his very intelligent political travel book, *Europe, Europe*,[1] "but a conglomeration of mistakes?" Answering this question means ignoring both the rapidly dissolving boundaries between the political systems of East and West, and also the Europe of the large states. For, while Britain, France and Germany have at last succeeded in exorcising "the neurotic phantoms of past empire",[2] it is in the smaller states—Sweden and Hungary, Portugal and Poland—that the past beckons most insistently, insinuating that Europe does not and cannot exist—whether it be the Europe of the twelve, or the Europe of Mr Gorbachov's common home.

Described in *The Observer* as "a cheery libertarian of the Left", Enzensberger finds his libertarianism offended as much by the European Community which he sees as bureaucratic and impersonal, as by the European Left which simply puzzles him. Indeed, he is more perplexed by the success of the Left in Sweden than by its failure in Hungary and Poland. The central theme of the second half of the 20th century, Irving Kristol once said, is the death of socialism. Yet if socialism is dead, has Europe ever existed? Or is Europe just another ersatz faith—as remote from real human aspirations as socialism and equally doomed to failure?

What both these movements have in common for Enzensberger is their flawed view of human nature, their attempt to direct human vitality into narrow institutional channels. Both the European Community and modern socialism —whether in its Communist or social democratic variant —seem to Enzensberger far too impatient with that awkward cussedness which serves to distinguish one person from another, one locality from another, one nation from another. Both represent, in the last resort, so he feels, a denial of life.

In Sweden, admittedly, "It really looked as if the Social Democrats, the hereditary tenants of this political culture, had succeeded in taming the human animal where other quite different régimes, from theocracy to Bolshevism, had failed". But the price, for Enzensberger, seems to be the crushing of all social imagination and sense of initiative. The answer to every problem is to form a committee. The citizen spends his life protected by what Max Weber called "the armour of institutions". And that is only tolerable in a society in which civic trust is widespread.

> "Whether it's a matter of dealing with the 'hot line', alcoholism, the education of their children, town planning, health, or income tax, the citizens of Sweden regard their institutions with a trust and lack of suspicion that takes good intentions entirely for granted. Such an attitude would be incomprehensible to a Spaniard, an Irishman, an Italian, or a Frenchman, to whom skepticism, lack of enthusiasm, and mistrust have long been second nature. . . ."

THERE IS AN even closer connection in Enzensberger's mind between the European Community and the ideal of socialism. Both are products of an age which "still believed in technological progress, in growth and rationalisation". Yet this age is, seemingly, passing away. The upheavals in Central Europe have been hailed by many in the West as a revolt against state control in favour of the market economy; but that is a very partial perspective. Any realistic account of what has happened must give a prominent role to the Church which is so very closely associated, especially in Poland, with age-long national aspirations.

Catholicism, as Enzensberger appreciates, has formed the main centre of resistance against the Communist attempt to break down the individuality of the Polish people. The Church, indeed, "commands the only public space into which the power of the state cannot penetrate". Someone

[1] *Europe, Europe: Forays into a Continent.* By HANS MAGNUS ENZENSBERGER. Translated by MARTIN CHALMERS. Hutchinson, £14.95.

[2] See Enzensberger's interview with Neal Ascherson, "Cheery libertarian of the Left", *The Observer*, 24 September 1989.

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reminds Enzensberger of a saying by Marek Edelman, last survivor of the Warsaw Ghetto rising: "In Poland everyone believes in God, but only to spite the Reds." More generally, however, the Church stands for everything that is not material, for something higher than the everyday struggle to earn a living. "We are making together", said Lamartine in 1848, "the sublimest of poems." That, more than the language of economic rationality, captures the drive for human freedom which, in 1989 as in the setting-up in France of the Second Republic, animates even those who have never known it.

Enzensberger's Polish host (a scholar who, having lost his professorship, lives from hand to mouth) speaks not of Milton Friedman and von Hayek, but of Buber, Nietzsche and Dostoevsky, even of Klages and Ernst Jünger. "Rationalism", Enzensberger's guides told him, "is finished":

> "Perhaps the turning point, the metaphysical reversal that is being signalled everywhere in the world, will begin here. This is the opportunity prevented by Poland's misfortune, it is concealed within it like the kernel in the nut. The pope is the symbol of this hope."

The attack on materialism is something that Enzensberger notices also in the countries of the West which he most admires—in Italy and in Portugal—as well as in the East. In Italy, both Fascism and social democracy have foundered on the shoals of the anarchic ways of the Italians who, Enzensberger claims, in contrast to the sober Swedes, have no social super-ego, no sense of the public good—that vital requirement without which any collectivist philosophy, whether it be socialist or fascist, is doomed.

As a consequence of late unification, in Italy "the state always appeared as an occupying power, so the people resisted it with stubborn antipathy and extreme mistrust. . . ." True allegiance continued to lie with local units, with particular regions and towns, and power remained a face-to-face phenomenon. Power in Italy is something concrete, not abstract, something associated with particular individuals, not with the State.

> "One can—one wants to—touch it; something of its *mana*, its electricity, is transferred to anyone who comes into contact with it. It's the most widely used aphrodisiac. In the word *potenza* the political significance merges with the sexual. A famous Sicilian saying expresses duality with matchless perfection: '*Commandare e meglio di fottere*' (Ruling is better than fucking)."

Can Italy, then, be "a 'laboratory of the post-modern' which, thanks to its relative backwardness and its premodern vestiges, is better able to absorb each future shock? The last shall be first. . . ."

If, in Italy, economic rationality comes to be subordinated to face-to-face power-relationships, in Portugal it is powerlessness and isolation which lead to the flight from capitalist efficiency, as a form of escapism:

> ". . . what the Portuguese set against capitalist rationality is not simply incompetence but resistance. It's certainly difficult to tell one from the other. In any case, the result is a kind of silent sabotage that is not practised out of anger, conviction, resentment, ideology, or defiance, as it is elsewhere. They don't attack capitalist efficiency, they avoid it, spontaneously, 'just like that'; because it's not self-evident to the Portuguese, because the virtues it demands are not theirs."

Would it be too fanciful to see the only genuinely transnational phenomenon of the 1989 Euro-elections—the rising Green vote—as yet another manifestation of this spirit of anti-materialism? It is ironic, perhaps, that this manifestation was at its strongest in Thatcherite Britain, where no less than 15% of the electorate supported the Greens, a party hostile both to the Community and to economic growth. For it is in the country of Western Europe whose government is most determinedly committed to economic advancement that the revolt against it appears most deep-seated. The British electorate has listened politely to Mrs Thatcher's sermons, but has, equally politely, proceeded to ignore them. How little difference, one is tempted to suggest, the decade of "the Thatcherite revolution" has really made to the deep-seated instincts of the British people, sentimental and unmaterialistic—the perfect country, perhaps, for Mr Enzensberger's quizzical eye.

IF, THEN, SOCIALISM IS DEAD in contemporary Europe, it would be a mistake to imagine that it will be replaced by a homogeneous capitalist civilisation from the Atlantic to the Baltic. Economic rationality is not, of itself, a force to drive men and women to the barricades. The freedom which Central Europeans search for comprises more than the freedom to compete in the marketplace. But even a wholly capitalist Europe would face problems. For what can be the future of capitalism—essentially a competitive creed—if it runs out of competitors? "Capitalism always required opposition, contradiction, to develop itself", Enzensberger said in his *Observer* interview. But if Francis Fukuyama is right and history has come to an end,[3] how can capitalism develop? Is not the end of history also the end of progress?

Central Europe, however, is likely to face more immediate problems. For democratisation, as the years between the wars show all too clearly, is no guarantee against nationalism. On the contrary, the greater the degree of popular involvement in government, the more the temptation to irredentism. Democratic Germany proved more dangerous to the world than ever Imperial Germany had been; and Hitler was the product of a régime based upon universal suffrage. The absence of Jews in Central Europe is a horrifying and permanent reminder of the consequences of the extremes of nationalism: "Berettyóújfalu doesn't need a synagogue any more, only a large Jewish cemetery behind a wire fence, locked up, overgrown with weeds."

But Enzensberger is simply wrong when he states that in Europe "There are no longer any disputed borders or threatening minority problems." There are all too many territorial

[3] Francis Fukuyama, "The End of History", in *The National Interest*, Summer 1989. See also Anthony Hartley's discussion of Fukuyama's theory, "On Not Ending History", ENCOUNTER, September-October 1989.

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problems in Central and Eastern Europe—Macedonia, Kosovo, Transylvania, Silesia, even the Baltic states and the Ukraine—any one of which could become the fuse for a populist demagogue; while in Poland the Catholic Church still prays for "our brothers in Vilnius and Lwow"—echoes of the Poland of Pilsudski and the Colonels!

It is this danger posed by the resurgence of nationalism, both in Germany and in the states to the east of Germany, which makes so powerful a case for the further strengthening of the European Community. It was Konrad Adenauer who appreciated that only a Germany integrated with the West would cease to be a menace to its neighbours. If the Community cracks, the result is likely to be the Balkanisation of Europe, shifting national alliances, the return of "the German question"[4] and perpetual instability. The break-up of Empires, as the history of the years before 1914 should have taught us, is a time of acute danger to international order. Now is certainly not the time to undermine one of the few stable landmarks in a rapidly changing continent.

ENZENSBERGER IS RIGHT, of course, to emphasise the cultural diversity of Europe. Yet that is not an argument for despairing of the project of European unity. On the contrary, it poses a challenge—how can institutions be developed that could accommodate a Europe of cultural differences: Burckhardt's Europe, rather than a Europe of the economists and technocrats.

There is no reason to believe that the creative wisdom of Europeans is not equal to the challenge of devising such institutions. Indeed, the European federalists, much maligned in Britain, have been devoting their energies to precisely this task. The conventional caricature of federalism, thoughtlessly repeated by Mrs Thatcher in her now notorious Bruges speech of September 1988, is that it prescribes a homogeneous Europe, with all national differences ironed out. Yet, on the contrary, the whole *raison d'être* of federalism is precisely to create a form of organisation which, as in Switzerland, provides for different cultures, different languages, different religions, to coexist peacefully, side by side. The federal method is the method of accommodating diversity, not of suppressing it.

It is part of Enzensberger's charm that he is a romantic anarchist, sceptical of institutions; although even he is forced to ask himself the question:

> "When the visitor from the North has spent his last lire and returned to the German, Belgian, or Swedish autumn, doesn't he after all heave a secret sigh of relief because everything in the North—the central heating, the state, the telephone—works so well?"

But Enzensberger fails to see that ideals, however generous, need to be reflected in institutions if they are to be at all effective. Is it not, indeed, due to the effectiveness of institutions—above all, of NATO and the European Community—that the West has "won" the Cold War and that Europe is

[4] "By 'the German question' you British mean 'the German danger'", a German academic friend remarked to me in Heidelberg earlier this year.

In the Winter issue of
THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Francis Fukuyama
replies to his critics
•••
Robert Bork describes
"The Limits of International Law"
•••
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"My Falklands War and Theirs"
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now the symbol of democracy rather than of division and despair?

As Central Europe breaks up into its component parts, the challenge for those of us living in the West, surely, is to give practical effect to our generosity of spirit by devising an institutional structure which can link the European Community to the newly democratising nations so that the Community becomes, not an exclusive club, but a pole of attraction for its neighbours to the east. Enzensberger, however, is a poet not a constitution-builder, Lamartine rather than Benjamin Franklin.

Yet, in the last resort, better the idealist who disparages institutions than the technocrat without ideals. For to ignore the power of ideals is itself to become impractical. That, surely, is the lesson of that marvellous year 1989, when in Europe the impossible became a reality. I write at a time when even the Czech Communist government, elected by Soviet tanks, has promised to include non-Communists within its ranks; and there is something curiously apposite in the lines of Ingeborg Bachmann's poem[5] with which Enzensberger concludes his book.

If Bohemia still lies by the sea, I'll believe in the sea.
And if I believe in the sea, I can hope for land. . . .

Come here, all you Bohemians, seamen, harbor whores and ships
unanchored. Don't you want to be Bohemians, all you Illyrians,
Venetians and Veronese. Play the comedies that make us laugh. . . .

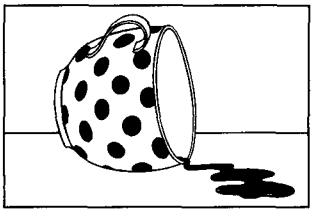
I still border on a word and a different land,
I border, like little else, on everything more and more,

a man from Bohemia, a vagrant, a player,
who has nothing and whom nothing holds,
granted only, by a questionable sea, to gaze at the land of my choice. . . .

[5] Ingeborg Bachmann's *In the Storm of Roses: Selected Poems*, translated by Mark Anderson, were published by Princeton University Press in 1986.

Light Heavy-Weight?

The Plays of Simon Gray—By TIMOTHY KIDD



SIMON GRAY has been unfortunate. I am not referring to the nervy, accident-prone existence so comprehensively detailed in his personal memoirs, but rather to the lack of critical recognition of his substantial body of work. Entire volumes have been written about such minor or faded dramatists as Trevor Griffiths and John Arden; the only books about Gray's work have both been written by himself. It is possible, given his attitude towards much of what passes for literary criticism ("a fraudulent fluency", etc.), that he would regard such neglect as a positive advantage. Even so, critical comment has tended to the dismissive. One study of modern English drama classified him as a *farceur*, "considerably less accomplished as a sheer entertainer than Ayckbourn". Another condescendingly observed that ". . . it is altogether possible that Simon Gray nurtures fantasies of deeper significance for his works", while dismissing him as "Agatha Christie with intellect". A third picked up the latter point by lamenting that Gray is "a playwright of such intelligence that it is hard to explain why he has not been an innovator", and covered his entire dramatic work in two paragraphs.[1]

It is not clear why this should be so. Simon Gray has been successful as a playwright in both Britain and America. His work has given intelligence and literary distinction to a stage often noticeably lacking in those qualities. It has attracted the formidable talent of directors such as Harold Pinter and John Dexter, and actors like Alan Bates, Michael Gambon, and Billie Whitelaw. Yet critics have remained unimpressed. Newspaper reviewers have on the whole been more favourable than their academic counterparts. None the less, their praise has often been equivocal. Recently, one wrote that "Simon Gray's plays usually hold one's attention while one is watching them, though they sometimes fail to stay in the mind for long afterwards, rather like the theatrical equivalent of a Chinese meal." After more than twenty years of achievement, Gray is still often regarded, in the words of another critic, as "the heaviest lightweight in the business".[2]

The playwright himself, in *How's That For Telling 'Em, Fat Lady?* (1988), one of his wry pieces of autobiographical record, has ascribed this undervaluing on the part of the critics to their very familiarity with the milieu of his plays:

> "Reviewers always seemed to think they had in some way to square up to me, though more so in London than in the States, perhaps because my characters came from the sort of world London reviewers themselves inhabited."

No doubt there is much truth in this. The unknown is inhe-

[1] John Russell Taylor, *The Second Wave* (1978), p. 169; C. W. E. Bigsby (ed.), *Contemporary English Drama* (1981), p. 183; Ronald Hayman, *British Theatre Since 1955* (1979), p. 69.

[2] Charles Osborne, *Daily Telegraph*, 25 June 1987; John Russell Taylor, *Plays International* (May 1988), pp. 24-25.

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rently disturbing. Contemporary plays about unemployment, social dereliction, disablement, or crime frequently gain a more respectful hearing since the world they depict is so remote from that of the urban élite. Of course, the playwrights share the same kind of background, being mostly university-educated and living comfortably off various forms of subsidy. But their plays often appear profound simply because the problems they evoke are more harrowing—whereas, facing a Simon Gray drama, the critics feel they are back at home in Highgate. His male characters are publishers, academics, or barristers; their wives are teachers, novelists, or researchers. The setting is a North London living-room; books line the walls and Wagner is on the gramophone. The conversation is witty, knowledgeable, ironic. It is not merely a literate but a literary world: the television set is viewed with derision. To appear on it is an admission of failure, however lucrative. The printed or spoken word is the thing. It is true that Simon Gray has not yet gone so far as to put a drama critic on the stage, but there are numerous references to the profession. In *The Common Pursuit* (1984) there is an offstage character named Nappies Harrup, who is "going to be theatre critic on the *Sunday Times*. Apparently they're impressed by his lack of qualifications."

In Gray's drama, most of the characters went to Oxbridge, or must strive to meet the standards of those who did. They aspire to success in the metropolitan world as in their personal lives, but usually fail to achieve either. Gray takes a bleak relish in the way in which people trip each other up, betray themselves or their spouses, belie their early ambition, or else succeed at the price of compromise and self-contempt. It is a world of graceless gain and elegant loss: a recognisable coming-to-terms with the diminished horizons of modern Britain. The articulacy and self-awareness of the characters illuminate the bleakness of their plight, and yet their predicaments, however appalling, are presented ironically, even comically. Simon Gray lacks the moralising instinct that is so prevalent among contemporary English playwrights. Instead, he finds a mordant humour in failure and defeat. "I'm glad to report", he writes of a series of disasters in his own life, "that from there, everything got worse."[3]

THE FAMILIARITY of Gray's dramatic world is both a strength and a limitation. His attempts to move outside it have seldom been happy. *The Rear Column* (1978), purportedly set in equatorial Africa in the late 19th century, in fact shows a group of educated Britons sitting around in the Congolese jungle, back-biting and correcting one another's assertions in Gray's customary vein. He ruefully noted that it was "made unendurable all over again by the critics, who got the play off the stage in six weeks".[4]

I once heard a well-known critic declare that there *is* only one Simon Gray play. That is perhaps overstating the case, but one can trace certain repetitions of subject-matter and theme. The story of *The Rear Column* was first told in *Otherwise Engaged* (1975), which is a virtual reworking of the plot of *Dog Days* (1976, but written earlier). *Molly* (1977) is a stage version of the television play *Death of a Teddy Bear* (1967). Academic Cambridge is the setting for *Close of Play* (1979), *Quartermaine's Terms* (1981), and part of *The Common Pursuit* (1984). Academic Oxford is the setting for *After Pilkington* (1987), which contains a character who has just arrived from Queen Mary College, London ("A dump down in the East End. You won't have heard of it.")—which is the setting for *Butley* (1971) and the institution where Gray was an academic for twenty years.

Perhaps the most striking of Gray's recurrent images is that of the central character—a handsome, slightly rumpled, middle-aged man of youthful appearance, the part being taken by Alan Bates. He will be on stage for the rest of the play, during which he scores witty and acerbic points off lovers, friends, and family. At the same time, he disintegrates emotionally. "It's crack-up time again", said Alan Bates in an interview before undertaking his sixth Gray leading-role, in *Melon* (1987). "But there are some extremely funny lines on the way."[5]

It would, however, be wrong to give the impression that Gray's work is nothing more than a restatement of a single theme. Many playwrights, especially those who deal with contemporary life, have offered a series of examinations of a known milieu; Chekhov would be an obvious example. Like Chekhov, Gray is both an insider and a detached critic of his world. It is the world of the educated British professional class: not those who run the country, but those who teach, advise, entertain or comment on those who do. His characters have self-awareness and a sense of responsibility for their own behaviour, even when it leads—as it often does—to disaster.

> WOOD: If life catches up with everybody at the end, why hasn't it with you?
> SIMON: But I haven't got to the end yet, thank God. I'm sure it will eventually.

And eventually, indeed on that very day, it does.

This exchange from *Otherwise Engaged* might be taken as the epigraph to the whole of Simon Gray's work. His is a drama in which the characters ultimately have to take the consequences of their actions—or, in the case of the idle Quartermaine or the passive Simon Hench, inactions. They themselves, rather than society, are to blame for their predicament.

IN THIS RESPECT, as in others, Gray's work is at variance with the prevailing mode of much of contemporary British drama. His plays do not conform to the social orthodoxy of the current subsidised theatre. Very few have been performed there, and then usually without success. Qualities such as literacy, irony, and the use of grammatical speech have often been regarded as "élitist" by those who manage our subsidised theatres, at least as far as new writing is concerned. (It is perhaps a sad comment on the state of British education, as well as on the British theatre, that this

[3] Simon Gray, *How's That for Telling 'Em, Fat Lady?*, p. 45.
[4] Simon Gray, Introduction, *Plays: One* (1986), p. x.
[5] Alan Bates, *Mail on Sunday*, 21 June 1987.

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should be so.) And the all-pervading Leftist orthodoxy of the past two decades has not been hospitable to Gray's kind of writing.

It is not that Gray's work took no notice of wider social issues, simply that what he might have to say about them would not be conformable. There are caustic comments on student revolt in *Butley*, on political trade-union bosses in *Melon*, and on loutish squatters in *Otherwise Engaged*. Decline in educational standards is a recurrent theme. And the opening of *Stage Struck* (1979) gives a scathing picture of the levels to which our society had sunk by the late 1970s:

> ROBERT: Working hard?
> HERMAN: Well, I haven't done much recently. For one thing I can't get to the library. On Monday there was the tube strike. Then on Tuesday the library porters were on strike so they wouldn't fetch any books up, then on Wednesday the librarians came out to show solidarity with the porters who'd gone back and then yesterday when I telephoned to find out what was going on nobody answered, so I suppose the telephonists were out to show solidarity with the librarians who've probably gone back.
> ROBERT: What I'm looking forward to is a tourists' strike, a day when they'll all refuse to come out of their hotels and spend their money looking at our pageantry and picket-lines, so I can go into town and do some exotic shopping without being treated as an undesirable resident, eh, drink?
> HERMAN: No thanks.
> ROBERT: Oh. Are you all right?
> HERMAN: Do I? Perhaps because it all seems so bloody pointless.
> ROBERT: Oh it is, from what I can make out. Because apparently the money they finally get is worth less than the money they were getting when they went on strike for it by the time they actually succeed in getting it which is why they have to come out again immediately they've got it to get some more of it and so forth, don't worry about it and do have a drink.

One simply was not allowed to say this kind of thing on the subsidised stage of the period, not even in jest. As a result, Simon Gray's work, like that of Tom Stoppard (which shares similar qualities), has lent intelligence and literary distinction to the commercial West End stage. I have no doubt that their plays will survive as a portrait of the present era when subsidised drama of greater stridency has long passed from memory.

GRAY FIRST FOUND his voice in a now-forgotten play, *Spoiled* (1969). Until then, as he has acknowledged, his characters spoke "through heavy disguises, in fabricated theatrical Cockney". In this play he discovered for the first time "how to make educated people talk to each other as it seems to me they do", a form of dramatic realism which none the less involved what he termed "degrees of calculation and harmony".[6] Here, he began to explore the ways in which educated syntax coped with the pressures of daily life under increasing emotional and psychological stress. In Gray's work, these pressures are often quite domestic—pregnancy, alcoholism, difficult adolescence, adultery.

Many of these features appeared in *Spoiled*, but the main theme was the morality of education. The central figure, a teacher, develops a homosexual attraction towards one of his young pupils. At the play's conclusion, his long-suffering wife finally rounds on him and demolishes his self-esteem: "I don't like good teachers. They really are self-indulgent . . . moralising, philosophising, gossiping, weeping, advising—it's just self-indulgence." The theme is one to which he returned in a number of later plays. Gray himself taught English for more than two decades; in an interview in 1972 he said that "teaching is so deeply a habit with me that I'm not sure if I could face life without it."[7] But his sense of ambivalence about the profession was expressed in an interview published five years later, entitled "Teaching is My Bloody Life".[8]

His best-known play on the subject, *Butley* (1971), was set in an institution very similar to Queen Mary College where Gray was teaching at the time; indeed the stage-set was taken, "down to details", from his own room at the College.

Butley is a spoiled teacher. Instead of encouraging his pupils, he rebuffs them. Instead of expounding English literature, he quotes Beatrix Potter. A former student recalls his inspirational past: ". . . those were the days when you still taught. Now you spread futility." Butley's personal affairs are conducted on the same basis of possessiveness combined with antagonism. He imagines that he can treat other people, including his wife and his closest friend and colleague, with caustic contempt, and that they will still adhere to him. The audience may laugh, from the safety of the stalls, at Butley's lacerating wit, but, equally, we should be appalled at the waste of an intelligent man's talent and of his personal relationships. The play ends on a note of Eliotic finality, with the dismissal of his latest prospective disciple: "You are not what I mean at all, not what I meant at all." Butley is left alone on stage, feebly trying to switch on a dead light-socket.

Gray returned to the theme of the clever, assertive, but self-destroying man in his most recent play, *Melon*. It is based on a true case-history of an academic psychologist whose attempt to live in an open marriage with his wife led to uncontrollable fits of sexual jealousy and to mental breakdown. The central character is not an academic, but a publisher—successful in marketing books as commodities rather than literature. Once again Alan Bates created the role of a witty, acerbic, and handsome man, who gives his family and friends the sharp edge of a resourceful tongue, and eventually ruins himself by indulging the belief that he can control his emotions in the same manner that he controls his career and his circle of dependants. In contemplating his fall, the word hubris comes to mind. Indeed, in a pre-production interview, Gray was quoted as being "half-inclined to call the play a tragedy, though it's a word he nervously disowns as soon as he has used it".[9] Perhaps his caution is

[6] Interview with Janet Watts, *The Guardian*, 26 October 1976.
[7] *Plays and Players*, August 1972, p. 33.
[8] *New York Times*, 9 February 1977.
[9] *Daily Telegraph*, 15 June 1987.

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justified; tragedy seems too large a concept for the framework of this sharply-observed naturalistic drama. Nevertheless, it is plain that in *Melon* the breakdown of the hero goes much deeper than in Gray's earlier work. The playwright has taken his characteristic vein of bleak and at times rather unpleasant humour much further than before, into the realm of real suffering and loss.

THE MAIN FIELD of Gray's drama, however, is social comedy, with an edge of pathos or despair. His most accomplished exercise in the genre is another play about teachers—in this case the staff of a language school in Cambridge. *Quartermaine's Terms* (1981), set in the early 1960s, is based in part on Gray's experience of teaching in a similar establishment. The central character, a more mature figure than in the previous plays, is a man of old-world politeness and charm (played in the original production by Edward Fox). Quartermaine's courtesy and his dated schoolboy enthusiasm ("I say, terrific!") scarcely conceal a deep inner sadness and vacuity. He is used by the other teachers—an eclectic set—as the repository of confidences, a source of free baby-sitting, and the butt of ill-directed rancour. His increasing inadequacy as a teacher leads, after some considerable time, to his dismissal. (Unlike Butley, he does not have academic tenure.) When he is informed of his fate by the new principal of the college, a long-standing friend, Quartermaine acquiesces with a gentlemanly English diffidence:

> "No, that's—right, thank you Henry. I—oh Lord, I know that I haven't got much to offer—never had, I suppose—and recently it's got even worse—it's a wonder—a wonder people have put up with me so long, eh?" *(He attempts a laugh.)*

The comedy of his situation shades off into pathos. We can also recognise a truth about the decline of a certain kind of English ideal in the post-War period; as Gray says in his introduction, "a world that vanished so poignantly before I'd even finished making fun of it". With his empire-building name, and his memories of the House and of wild swans on the lake at his aunt's home, St John Quartermaine is the inheritor of a fading tradition. All he can do now is teach English to foreigners—and ineffectually at that. When Gray was researching into the set and atmosphere of the play, he visited a branch of the school at which he had formerly taught. He discovered that "the schools, in which foreigners were taught both our language and our customs, were now owned by a Swiss consortium". And he adds: "This seems to me a reasonable metaphor for the state of the nation."[10]

But Gray (showing heroic self-restraint) does not editorialise in his plays—even in *The Common Pursuit*, a play in which the entire cast comprises the editorial board of a literary magazine. When his characters express ideas or opinions, as they often do, these arise naturally from their personality or from the situation. Gray's drama is closely controlled, but not manipulated to produce a designed effect. Irony or understatement are often employed; his characters resist being over-explicit. In *Otherwise Engaged,* the central character, Simon Hench, expresses this view to his unhappy wife:

> "In my experience, the worst thing you can do to an important problem is discuss it. You know—*(sitting down)*—I really do think this whole business of non-communication is one of the more poignant fallacies of our zestfully over-explanatory age. Most of us understand as much as we need to without having to be told."

Hench has a personal motive here for his more general disquisition: he does not want to be told by his wife that she is having an affair. For her part, she is anxious to reveal it, having just discovered that she is pregnant. The irony of their situation is created by the conflict between their attitudes and their behaviour, exposed in a series of revelations that are both painful and comic.

ANOTHER PLAY which climaxes with the revelation of an illicit pregnancy is *The Common Pursuit.* This is the third of Gray's dramas to be set, at least in part, in Cambridge. Gray's ambivalence about his old university and its values is apparent not only in these plays but also in the ones with a metropolitan setting. Gray spent a total of eight years in Cambridge: two years doing a second BA in English, and six years working on but failing to com-

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[10] Simon Gray, *Plays: One,* p. xi.

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plete (or even start) a Ph.D. dissertation. At the end of this period in 1964, he was appointed a lecturer in English at Queen Mary College, London. He has made some return visits, albeit with reluctance:

> "Of all the places in the world I hate going to, I hate going to Cambridge the most . . . . There is the moment, as the London train slides along the interminable Cambridge platform, when my stomach lurches, and I violently wish I were visiting somewhere else I used to live; or even better, somewhere I've never lived at all."[11]

So it is characteristic of Gray that his last excursion there, accompanying the set designer of *The Common Pursuit*, should have turned out to be "exceptionally pleasant". As a result of the visit, the designer achieved a superb recreation of a grand first-floor set of rooms in Great Court for the opening and closing scenes of the play. The only real inaccuracy was the absence of an oak; although the production did include some Oxfordisms such as too-short gowns and references to a "Senior Moral Tutor". These were the more distracting in view of the play's emphasis on a Cambridge background and scale of values.

His experience at the university, whether for good or ill, provided Gray with far more than simply a background for some of his plays. *The Common Pursuit* is the title of a magazine founded by a group of undergraduates in the early 1960s—"Just what Cambridge needs, a new literary magazine." It takes its title and its tone from F. R. Leavis; the opening issue publishes a letter from him, full of words like "embattled" and "beleaguered". Gray was himself a disciple of Leavis, and has written of his intellectual debt to him both as teacher and critic.[12] In the play, the magazine transfers from Cambridge to the metropolis: a suspect move, from the Leavisite perspective. It manages to survive for some time, maintaining its high standards of critical rigour, although at considerable personal and financial cost. Eventually it closes down. The principal editor demands standards which are ultimately impossible to fulfil. (One is reminded of the—surely apocryphal—story of the Cambridge journal which published an article entitled "Is *King Lear* a Good Play?".) None the less, our sympathies are primarily with the effort to pursue true judgment. In Gray's work there is often a tension between mistrust of the metropolitan scene, with its pressures of ambition and material inducement, and admiration for its rewards, in the shape of achievement and fame. The price of success is often shown as being gained at the expense of personal integrity, while failure is no less bitter for being accompanied by the sense of rightness.

However, Gray's technique is satiric rather than moralistic. He displays a Leavisite zest for literary controversy in the defence of standards. The Arts Council and the BBC come in for particular derision. There is an entertaining scene in *The Common Pursuit* in which a member of the board describes his attempts to obtain a grant from an Arts Council committee. He is initially refused, on the grounds that the magazine is "élitist". In desperation, he produces material that has already been rejected, including the work of a malicious journalist, and of talentless Irish poets extolling "the shit exploding in our faces". This brings a cornucopia of subsidy.

Similarly, the television set and those who appear on it are frequently the subject of ridicule. There is an assumption that TV is inherently trivialising, concerned with "marriages, mistresses, and other messes", rather than with the quality of a writer's work. Even so, for all the disdain expressed for this crass medium, Gray is the author of a number of notable television dramas. And he has been known to satirise the terminology of literary criticism:

> DAVINA: But of course he's out of the habit, if he was ever in it, of talking to women who like to think and therefore talk concisely, for whom intelligence does actually involve judgment, and for whom judgment concludes in discrimination.
> SIMON: Did you really go to Oxford?
> DAVINA: Came down two years ago, why?
> SIMON: From your style, you sound as if you went to Cambridge.

Beneath the sophisticated literary comedy of Gray's work, however, there is usually an undercurrent of seriousness and suffering. In *The Common Pursuit*, a woman aborts her child, a husband is betrayed by his wife and his best friend, a once-promising writer fails to redeem his gift. These crises are seldom directly confronted: time and again, the playwright brings matters to a head, and then cuts away from the climactic moment, or brings in an outside interruption. This essentially televisual device can restrict a play's emotional impact on the stage. It may also lend support to critical assumptions about the inherent levity of Gray's work. But perhaps it is more than simply a device; one of his recurrent themes is the way in which people evade the truth, whether about themselves or about their situation. Refusal to face facts is often a strategy for survival; revelation is all too often destructive.

On a deeper level, Gray does explore questions of personal loyalty and integrity, although his prevailing tone is ironic. ("You moved to Oxford. You've forgotten how seriously we take moral matters at Cambridge.") In most of his plays, the characters eventually receive their just deserts; but sometimes they manage to avoid them. In *Quartermaine's Terms* a woman gets away with the murder of her mother. Whereas in *The Common Pursuit* it is the play's most high-minded and intelligent individual who suffers the most brutal and degrading fate: battered to death by a homosexual pick-up in the elegant Great Court rooms of the play's opening. "He was naked, apparently. Except for a sock."

Such is the serio-comic world in which Simon Gray sets his drama. It is an intelligent, literate, self-aware world, if not always an appealing or kindly one. And although Gray presents it with an edge of sardonic humour that occasionally seems cruel or tasteless, it is a recognisable aspect of the world in which we live.

[11] Simon Gray, "My Cambridge", in *An Unnatural Pursuit* (1985).
[12] "The Pursuit of F. R. Leavis", in *An Unnatural Pursuit*, pp. 211-13.

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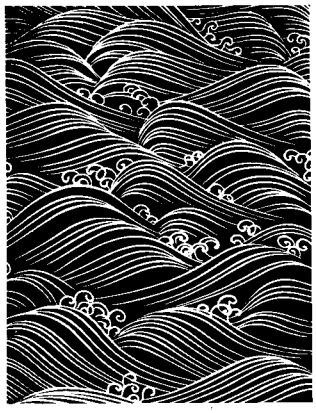
Travelling the Word

New Poetry—By FRASER STEEL



WHO IS A TOURIST? Not I, certainly, and (I charitably suppose) not you. Tourists are the people we see so many of, you and I, while we are on our business trips or relaxing in that particular corner of Tuscany or the Dordogne we have made so much our own. "Tourist" is still, in our well-travelled era, a category which no person of refined sentiments can join without fumbling for an alibi—the most durable of which, from the days of the Grand Tour, has been the desire for cultural and social education.

Blowing this cover has been a fine joke in English writing, from the *ingénus* of 18th-century picaresque fiction to *A Room With a View* and beyond. Generally the joke is the same: the high-mindedness of the professed intent doesn't survive the voyage because more basic and homely concerns keep breaking in. Tourism is a juvenile phase, like acne, and the joke is ultimately on the unfortunates who don't outgrow it seasonably. It's Henry James who takes it beyond a joke, to the point where he invites us to ask who, after all, is the tourist. Is it Maggie Verver in *The Golden Bowl*, young, beguiled, betrayed, but with an uncompromised sense of what is permanent; or is it her sophisticated, faithless Prince, knowingly at home in his native world of Europe and duplicity, but with no abiding city?

But Henry James is the Tolstoy of tourism—it is his great theme. Most others are content to mine the rich vein of comic misgiving and leave the matter much as they found it in the estimation of the right-thinking. The tourist is a facile fellow whose superficiality is to be despised, and only the irretrievably complacent could play the part for long.

Something of this disdain for tourism seeped into the reception of one of the year's most accomplished books of poetry, *Devices and Desires* by Dick Davis.[1] It certainly got on the wrong side of Peter Reading in *The Sunday Times*, where he seemed to sense a connection between the "overweening smugness" he found in the stance of the poems and the "globetrotting" of their author. Peter Reading is a properly astringent critic, but not at all the belabourer of everything in sight that his own poems might suggest. This time, though, he is close to exasperation:

> "The themes are the usual Parnassian ones (the transience of life, the triumph, or otherwise, of love and heroic moral action over this, the question of a deity and so on). Typically, Davis frets over these issues from some cultured starting point—a painter, a character from an opera, an exotic ruin. . . . A poem (pompously) called 'Syncretic and Sectarian' worthily denounces dogma. There is little here which is not resolutely goody-goody."

This is the poem which Reading denounces:

> *If, unbeguiled by that suspicious wraith*
> *Called Purity, we look with favour on*
> *The nebulous, syncretic faith*
> *Of Shah Jahan's first-born, unworldly son—*
>
> *(Translating Hindu scriptures into Persian,*
> *Convinced the sadhu and the sufi were*
> *Lost brothers, squabbling for the version*
> *Of one tremendous truth) we must refer,*
>
> *As well, to that blunt, younger brother who*
> *—Contemptuous of vapid heresy—*
> *Was more than eager to pursue*
> *(By fratricide) the wraith of Purity.*

Not that this is Davis's best poem (though it gives a fair sense of the finesse with which he melds sense and verse). It is worth quoting in full, though, because Reading has misunderstood it in a way which gives a clue to what is most substantial in Davis's work, yet most likely to elude the eye of current poetic sensibility.

The poem Reading sees and repudiates is one that says "If, as good liberals, we espouse tolerance, then we must condemn dogmatism as its opposite". This is the plot of a tedious poem which has indeed been written many times, but not by Dick Davis. The "if . . . then" of the actual poem is the pivot of a different argument, more complex, less comfortable, and possibly not very goody-goody: those whose sympathies lie with the syncretic are not instructed to denounce, but to acknowledge the sectarian. Acknowledgement will involve a pondering—weighing—of zeal and single-mindedness against its opposite, attractive enough to the modern Western temper, but short of the means, perhaps of the motive, for adequate self-defence (*vide* the controversy over *The Satanic Verses*).

The poem doesn't resolve the equation: where it is resolute is in holding the uncomfortable question steady for scrutiny. Notable confrontations in our time between militant zeal in some areas of the world and more tolerant arrangements in others have made it a question of general concern, but for Davis it is personal in a particular way. Now a teacher of Persian in Ohio, he lived and worked for eight years in Iran, where he and his Iranian wife cannot now return. When his poems contain "an exotic ruin", it is generally not a tourist snapshot but a landmark of a civilisation he has gone further than most towards understanding.

[1] *Devices and Desires: New and Selected Poems 1967-87.* By DICK DAVIS. Anvil Press, £11.95.

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There is a note of personal regret which sounds through many of his poems, yet doesn't disorder them. Perhaps it fuels the zeal for order which makes Davis one of the few poets who can think in verse—not versify their thoughts, but find, through mastery of the movement of speech, an embodiment of the mind in action.

WITH DAVIS, it is most often a balancing action, pondering alternatives in the knowledge that even the better of them will not satisfy. "Near Coltishall" addresses the not particularly Parnassian topic of nuclear war—or rather, *fear* of nuclear war ("Who shall escape defeat/From what we dream of war?"). It's an area of discussion where people, particularly writers, are expected to line up on one side or the other: poets and serious novelists to the left, warmongers to the right, please.

But Davis doesn't. He is reading Montaigne as he hears the aircraft fly over, with their nuclear freight. In a finely cadenced conclusion he invites Montaigne into an internal conversation which turns from the inadequate alternatives, not in favour of escapism, but towards a more inclusive and humane sense of the threat which faces and will devour us all:

> *Which would you choose, my lord—*
> *The cant of government,*
> *The smug cant of dissent?*
> *Or would you turn toward*
> *Your book's long argument*
>
> *That wisdom is to know*
> *How blindly we descend*
> *To where no arms defend*
> *Our ignorance from no*
> *Imaginable end?*

Montaigne, Moghul history, a clutch of Middle Eastern ruins, verse whose surface is so well worked that the casual gaze may not see beneath it—my guess is that Peter Reading mistook these for signs of the kind of tourist poetry he is right not to want, where wide acquaintance with the globe and the culture is paraded on a scaffolding of commonplaces.

READING HAS HIMSELF been the victim of misunderstanding, and of a more bruising kind. A few years ago a short piece of his appeared in *The Times Literary Supplement* under the title "Cub", and attracted accusations of anti-Semitism. Soon the signers of literary round robins were on the scent of a poem which was hardly more than a worthy denunciation of dogma on all sides of the Lebanese business. And he too has been under suspicion of tourism—the dossers and winos who occupy so much of his attention live in a world, it might be said, which he has no intention of actually inhabiting.

The standard objection to Reading sees him as the fat boy who likes to make your flesh creep, a garrulous retailer of vicarious horrors. The standard riposte casts him as the bard of the immiseration of Thatcher's Britain, doing for poetry what Derek Jarman did for cinema in *The Last of England*. Both miss the point. These are the accidents of a poetry whose substance is the catastrophic nature of the human condition. If he'd lived in the 14th century, Reading would have written a great deal about bubonic plague. In the late 20th there have been some additions to the repertoire of natural and unnatural shocks, and these are in the centre of his gaze—not, though, to the exclusion of the sufficient reasons for misery and despair which have always lain around the human path. His occasional renderings of the idiocy of rural life (generally in Shropshire, but it could be anywhere: it certainly isn't Market Blandings) are as bleak as his notation of destitution in the city. Limbs are mangled indifferently by farm machinery and escalators on the London Underground, and voices of desolation from other ages mingle with the more contemporary complaints.

Perduta Gente[2] is the unmitigated summation of human catastrophe Reading has been moving towards. His early work could have been taken as the miscellaneous production of a basically comic writer in a particularly harsh vein. Through the '80s, single poems have given way to composed books which mark out their areas of outrage and pin them down for inspection, often with procedures which are ingeniously mechanical: in an atrocious pun on its title, *C* (1984) dealt with cancer in 100 sections of 100 words each, and in the more recent books an array of classical metres (often elegiacs) is used to manhandle intractable material. It's as if the individual lyric, harvested with a sickle, has given way to the heavy machinery needed to cut and bail the prairies of enormity which Reading faces.

THE USUAL resolute ingenuity is there in *Perduta Gente*. The particular group of lost people who occupy the stage are London down-and-outs, one of whom has come into possession of secret papers on safety procedures in the event of reactor damage. Collages of these papers are interleaved with torn pages of his journal and tracts of verse. A narrative is obscurely intimated, somehow involving a worker in a nuclear power station who has been exposed to radiation, to insupportable knowledge, or both. Cries in the streets of London are echoed in encampments in the birch woods of a contaminated Russia; legions of the lost speak in meths-rotted maunderings or tones of Anglo-Saxon stoicism.

The title and some of the references are from *The Divine Comedy*, which is a *comedia* only in virtue of the transcendent redemption which underpins it. The value and importance of Peter Reading's poetry is that he gives us the Inferno without the Purgatorio and Paradiso. There is no glimpse of redemption, and I imagine that the kind of transcendence which allows the inhabitants of the inferno to freeze or fry in perpetuity would have him lining up with that other poet of Shropshire bucolics in damning "Whatever brute and blackguard made the world". But the ills of humanity, unmitigable though inflected by changing times, are Reading's theme, and this time he's managed to get most of them in. It will not be popular, and it is not tourism.

[2] *Perduta Gente*. By PETER READING. Secker & Warburg, £5.00.

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CRISTOPHER MIDDLETON seems to be permanently on tour. His Selected *Writings*[3] cover more than 25 years of the working life of an English poet resident in Texas and as well-acquainted with the Classics and modern German literature as he is with Provence, Anatolia, and the other venues of his poems. The book is subtitled *A Reader*, which is fair enough—it includes a selection of his short prose as well as two quite recent essays which throw as much light on his poetic aims and procedures as anything he has written.

Perhaps they should have been printed at the front of the book; Middleton can be difficult to get to grips with, and he benefits from a bit of self-explanation. The tone is relaxed and inviting, but the invitation is sometimes to consider a puzzle whose clues have gone missing. His allusiveness requires the reader to take a certain amount on trust—he's the kind of poet who can drop the Serbo-Croat for "ice cream" into a line with a fine neglect for elucidation, and like most charmers he can get away with murder. What's immediately evident is that he takes the world not as a vale of tears but as a matter of affectionate regard.

The poems of his early collections have a visual sense of the vibrancy of creatures as striking as that of Ted Hughes:

> *. . . two hands*
> *at a ladder shook*
> *free the tarantula, it slid*
>
> *black and fizzing to a rung*
> *above eye-level,*
> *knees jack knives,*
>
> *a high-jumper, bat mouth*
> *slit grinning*
> *into the fur belly . . . .*

Hughes might have written the description, but not the verse. Middleton's ordonnance doesn't so much emphasise the perceptions as communicate the perceiving—see how the most striking phrases are made to tarry by line-endings.

Behind the observation is the voice of one charmed by what he is seeing and saying. And the charm communicates; the predominant tone of the poems carries an implied invitation to complicity, to join the poet's discreet celebration. This is beguiling, but the charmed reader is sometimes stranded on shores of obscurity, the promised initiation not quite completed.

The rescue boat is moored among the essays. In "Reflections on a Viking Prow", whose occasion is the dragon-carved prow of the Oseberg Viking ship, but whose subject is the kind of poetry he wants, Middleton delineates a poetry of imagination held under the pressure of craft, "not hanging an edict on an anecdote" but fashioning a form of words which, under the hand of the disciplined and absorbed artificer, takes on in an almost animistic way the "essential virtù" of what it represents. Summoning up lost artistic practices (and obliquely describing his own ambition), he says:

> "Portrayal was not descriptive or derived. It was presentation, immediate and precise, of the being resonantly invoked by the image and stored in the image."

It is in the space between invocation and mere evocation that Middleton's ambitions range, and where he most baffles and enchants. A reader in search of anecdotes and edicts can only plod after the mercurial movement of a poem like "In Anatolia", where the sweep of a girl's hair becomes the wing of a bird, becomes stone, becomes a god, as separate layers of incident are speared through to each other by metonymy, and animated into something like the "aperture in being" which he asks poetry to open up:

> *. . . Stand there and speak. Tell*
> *Why no springs flow there. Why no folks walk*
> *The old streets. Did the no-good bird*
> *Eat the gods up? Let your wing fall*
> *To hide your face. We do not know*
> *What now to fear most.*

In common with the camera-toting tourist, Middleton is interested in appearances, but in his poetry there are no *mere* appearances. The datum is not an external object but a transaction between the imagination and what has seized it. In one of his short prose pieces, "A Memorial to the Room-Collectors", the speaker comes close to Middleton's own voice: ". . . much depends on how you view the visible world, as something solid, or as volatile energy frisking about in the air." His poetry is most teasing and lively when it negotiates between these positions.

THE TITLE OF Peter Porter's new collection, *Possible Worlds*, sounds like an invocation of that volatility, but it isn't quite. In a move that's characteristic of Porter's literary and intellectual turn of mind, it recasts a nugget of Wallace Stevens into a term of modal logic, while keeping Dr Pangloss's best of all possible worlds somewhere within earshot (you get a lot for your money). The simultaneous appearance of *A Porter Selected*, representing nearly a dozen collections since 1961, gives a longer view on a poet who is perhaps the last of the Grand Tourists.[4] Will there ever be another generation of Australians who see the trip to Europe as the inevitable move to a continent of culture from a way-offshore island? Porter has made the trip and

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[3] *Selected Writings: A Reader*. By CHRISTOPHER MIDDLETON. Carcanet, £18.95.

[4] *Possible Worlds. A Porter Selected*. By PETER PORTER. Oxford University Press, £5.95, £6.95.

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remained—wiser, no doubt, but not perceptibly sadder than the young man who was already about as sad as he could get, and given to viewing the ruins through a Claude-glass of elegant *angst*.

What's remarkable is how little he changes. Nearly 30 years on, there's the same eloquence tilting into plangency, the same air of being at home with the classic English metres, the same refusal to accept common currency as the arbiter of a poem's language (a select list of Porter vocabulary would make a handy appendix to *The Official Scrabble Word Book*: "peneplain", "larmoyant", "angophora", "currawong". . .), the same effort to filter Europe through Australia, the same sense of being out of sorts with the age. Even the targets of his irritation stay much the same: "John Marston advises anger", from his earliest collection, conjures up "a Condé Nast world" of assorted smoothies, PROs and market researchers which would sit comfortably in *Possible Worlds* if the proper names were changed.

All this adds up to a distinctive, and by now distinguished, poetic presence. You can tell a Peter Porter poem as soon as it walks into the room, even if the room's crowded; and it's usually a welcome arrival. But I have to admit to a Porter problem: there are some poems of his which speak plainly, and some which are densely allusive. Fine. There are some more, like "Fast Forward", where the eloquence moves up a notch, to the sublimely opaque:

> *The view from Patmos, the ghost inside*
> *the module! Living neither long enough*
> *nor so curtly brings us nominative snakes,*
> *time turned to blood upon the hour,*
> *fours and sevens when the Lamb lies down*
> *with Fury. And then Sir Headlong tells us. . .*

He can go on like this for quite a long time.

The rest of his work gives good reason to hope that efforts at understanding will be repaid, but before I make them I'd like to know whether Porter in this mode is difficult, or merely impossible. While an explanation is pending, the best criticism of this kind of vatic opacity is Wendy Cope's friendly parody:

> *. . . Art, he reflects, is rivalled only*
> *by a cargo of absolutes sailing northwards*
> *to Goethe's incomparable parakeet.*

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It's as if the edicts remain while the anecdotes which would have explained their force have sunk from view. But even the knotty bits are charged with the unmistakable Porter voice: the authoritative cadence of authentic self-pity. It starts early—

> *Every childhood has its playground kills,*
> *the innocentest cruelty and the wet*
> *despair which no maturer pain can quell. . .*

—and it sets in for the duration, adapting to circumstances where necessary:

> *I have begun to live in a new land,*
> *not the old land of fear*
> *but the new one of disappointment.*

Self-pity has had an undeservedly bad press. It may not be the most functional emotion, but it's one of the first evidences of reflective intelligence, and I've never met anyone without a bit of it. Nor would I wish to: the dominical command to love your neighbour as yourself falls flat if you happen to be consumed with self-hatred: and equally I don't see how anyone can be capable of compassion who is devoid of self-pity. Moreover, it's the only poetic emotion whose sincerity one need never doubt. In Porter's poetry, it's the beginning of compassion for all that ages, dies, or suffers loss. I'm content to waive the opacities of the Higher Tourism so long as Peter Porter goes on being beautifully disconsolate.

IF THERE ARE two poets untouched by the taint of tourism, they are surely R. S. Thomas and Iain Crichton Smith. Gaelic is Iain Crichton Smith's mother tongue, and of the writers who have made ours the greatest age of Gaelic poetry for two centuries he is the only one who is equally a poet in English. He has always lived close to his calf country (though who is to say whether the distance between a Lewis village and the largely English-speaking town of Oban is more or less than between London and Adelaide?), and his occasions are local even when, as in his long poem "Deer on the High Hills", his subjects are cosmic.

His new collection, *The Village and Other Poems*,[5] shows him still able to get that quiver of otherness out of the bits and pieces that wash up along his remote stretch of the shore:

> *It is true that the drowned return to us.*
> *In the blue eyes of children we see them,*
> *In a slight eccentricity of gait.*
>
> *They spring actively out of the water, seeming*
> *Smaller than they were, bearing*
> *Large smiles, corn-coloured crowns. . . .*

His poems owe some of their resonance to the ancient culture and language, now despoiled, which lie behind them. They owe something, too, to a life spent well away from the

[5] *The Village and Other Poems*. By IAIN CRICHTON SMITH. Carcanet, £6.95.

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marts of literature, where the spark of distinctiveness is too easily put out by concern with fashion and reputation, or blown into a hectic flame by fear of being lost in the pack. Iain Crichton Smith preserves into his seventh decade the lucidity of a child's eye, and some of the innocent audacity of childhood.

R. S. Thomas was rather a solitary child, or so it would seem from *The Echoes Return Slow*, now published in paperback.[6] This remarkable book continues the experiment in *Between Here and Now* (1981) of interleaving poems with something else, in this case the briefest prose summations of the successive stages of his life, written in the third person and printed opposite short reflective poems of startling directness and sometimes painful candour.

Thomas's retirement from the ministry of the Church in Wales has no doubt given him greater leisure to contemplate his life and work, but this is no piece of mere book-making. As well as conveying all the biographical information his readers have any business to know, it recapitulates the concerns and contexts of his poetry with a clarity which makes it essential reading for anyone who acknowledges the importance of his work. More importantly, it contains extensions of that work. Nowhere else in his poetry can I remember a personal piece more moving than the love poem in age with which the book ends:

> *I look out over the timeless sea*
> *over the head of one, calendar*
> *to time's passing, who is now open*
> *at the last month, her hair wintry.*
>
> *Am I catalyst of her mettle that,*
> *at my approach, her grimace of pain*
> *turns to a smile? What it is saying is:*
> *"Over love's depths only the surface is wrinkled".*

I am less taken with the orbiting, lenses, radiation, and twin helixes that have figured among the furniture of his writing since *Laboratories of the Spirit* (1976), but they have their part in the metaphysical penetration which has carried Thomas's poetry up to the heavens and down again to the deep. Incidentally, his book was printed in China, which just goes to show how far your words can travel when you've hardly moved outside a hundred-mile radius of your place of birth. A rebuke to tourists everywhere.

[6] *The Echoes Return Slow*. By R. S. Thomas. Macmillan, £4.99.

Non-Believer

His fruits are pieced together
Up here, the decorated plates
Of his pot-making phase,
The cerebral abstracts—

He lives in their bloom
Handling tonal and tactile
Qualities in his brain
In soft puffs. At ease

Among the new Cubists.
With a little glycerine
In the voice protects himself
Against Jean and those vague

Shadows that followed her
—Subsiding into the painless.
The shrinkage of indifference
Cleans the room of meaning.

He plods to the kitchen
For coffee. Our chat
Criss-crosses. Sense of
A thin veneer. Down there

The garden, a green plot
Bricked up in dark wall
Brings the chimaera of a freefall
—Nothing but the drop.

Rachel Blake

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Books Encountered

Terrorism: The PLO Connection. By YONAH ALEXANDER and JOSHUA SINAI. Crane Russak, $42.00, £31.00; paper $22.00, £16.00.

Well-documented account, with directory, chronology, and bibliography, of the PLO's history and policies, taking a highly sceptical view of Yasir Arafat's apparent change of heart, and pointing out the complexities within and around the organisation. Its prognostications, however, are astonishingly banal: negotiation and compromise, or escalation and destabilisation.

The Writing Systems of the World. By FLORIAN COULMAS. Basil Blackwell, £30.00.

Fascinating history and analysis, at its most original when pointing out the interaction between written and spoken language. Examples: Charlemagne's insistence that Latin be spoken as spelt led to its becoming only a written language; Noah Webster was responsible for "labor", "honor", etc., in American; Turkey could adopt Roman script in 1928 more easily owing to illiteracy.

Coleridge: Early Visions. By RICHARD HOLMES. Hodder & Stoughton, £16.95.

Shelley's most sympathetic biographer tackles the dazzling, helter-skelter young Coleridge. "I have taken Coleridge into the open air", he justly claims—easier in youth, but a wonderfully refreshing antidote to the almost canonical image of the bookish Old Man of Thermopylae/Who never did anything properly.

Divided Britain. By RAY HUDSON and ALLAN M. WILLIAMS. Belhaven Press, £30.00, paper £8.95.

Aggressively anti-Thatcherist (and anti-capitalist) polemic arguing that Britain was divided already, by wealth, sex, race, and location; that the present Government has intensified the divisions; and that they will continue after it unless—what? Convincing data: debatable diagnosis: no prescription. Help!

Mixed Blessings: An Almost Ordinary Life in Hitler's Germany. By HEINZ R. KUEHN. University of Georgia Press, $17.95, £16.95.

"Mixed Breed of the First Degree": it sounds like a cattle market, but this was the official classification which saved the young author, son of a Catholic father and a Jewish mother, from the Nazi ovens. His subtitle says it all, but his spare prose is as telling as Christopher Isherwood's in its cool indictment.

Perspectives and Identities: The Elizabethan Writer's Search To Know His World. By PETER LLOYD. Rubicon Press, £20.00.

Disguise, the author thinks, was not just a dramatic device for Shakespeare and others: it also expressed uncertainties—about humanity, the natural world, the spiritual life, science, geography, and astronomy, all in turmoil in the late Renaissance. Much here is familiar; but the links are plausibly traced.

Thomas Arnold, Head Master: A Reassessment. By MICHAEL McCRUM. Oxford University Press, £17.50.

"Ludicrously exaggerated, distorted, and unfair": not this book, but its verdict on Lytton Strachey's portrait of Arnold as an Eminent Victorian. The author, Master of Corpus Christi, Cambridge, former Headmaster of Tonbridge and Eton, taught classics at Rugby and is one of its Governors. So his corrective account is professional, mildly critical, and a bit headmasterly.

Red Brigades: The Story of Italian Terrorism. By ROBERT C. MEADE, JR. Macmillan, £35.00.

Well-researched, thoughtful narrative of the *Brigate Rosse*, their growth, their outrages (notably but by no means solely on Aldo Moro), and the calm, skill, and courage needed to defeat them. Good on specifically Italian stimuli and support; excellent on lessons for all democratic societies facing terrorists.

The Germans: Rich, Bothered and Divided. By DAVID MARSH. Century, £16.95.

Sensible, factual, and timely (though now outpaced) survey-with-figures by the chief German correspondent for the London *Financial Times*. On Europe, it shrewdly contrasts the Germans' growing preference for "federalism" with the "centralism" they increasingly dislike: HMG please note. On reunification, it suggests confederation.

Miss Manners' Guide for the Turn-of-the-Millennium. By JUDITH MARTIN. Pharos Books, $24.95.

Enormous (742-page) and wordy etiquette book in jokey old-fashioned style and typeface, clearly having more fun than many readers will. But the tiny print and excessive verbiage contain much common sense on courtesy problems posed by answering machines, faxes, bleepers, credit cards, "gay" weddings, etc.

Taming the Flood. By JEREMY PURSEGLOVE. Oxford University Press, £9.95.

Spin-off from a Channel 4 TV series: a splendidly illustrated, scholarly account of how water has been feared, curbed, wasted, harnessed, and increasingly despoiled. The author's particular concern is river management and wetland conservation: he sees danger in water privatisation but a chance in the new National River Authority.

Kristallnacht: Unleashing the Holocaust. By ANTHONY READ and DAVID FISHER. Michael Joseph, £16.95.

Lively, painfully vivid account of 9-10 November 1938, when the Nazis staged "the night of broken glass", smashing Jewish shop-fronts, beating and burning, in the biggest anti-Semitic pogrom since the Middle Ages. The pretext was the shooting of a young German diplomat: the sequel we know.

Satyajit Ray: The Inner Eye. By ANDREW ROBINSON. André Deutsch, £17.95.

Absorbing biographical and film-by-film study of the greatest Indian director, by an expert on both Indian and screen matters, with a glossary, filmography, excerpts from shooting notebooks, and nearly 150 stills or other illustrations. The only carp is that the plot summaries don't do justice to the films: but what could?

Philip Larkin: His Life's Work. By JANICE ROSSEN. Harvester Wheatsheaf, £14.95.

Intelligent, alert, close-to-the-text reading of Larkin's growth through his work. But on jazz, Ian Fleming, and dislike of Picasso—"the time and energy he devotes to these subjects make it somewhat difficult to take him seriously as an intellectual". Oh dear, oh dear.

The Other Europe. By JACQUES RUPNIK. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £6.95.

Revised and updated (August 1989) version of the book of the Channel 4 series first issued in 1988. Expert, deeply felt, very acute and even witty account of the tyranny and inefficiency which preceded and helped cause the present precarious renaissance of freedom and democracy in Eastern and Central Europe. "The most difficult time for decaying empires comes when they try to reform themselves."

Lawrence of Arabia: The Authorised Biography of T. E. Lawrence. By JEREMY WILSON. Heinemann, £25.00.

Ignore carping critics: this is a fine fair monument, with excellent illustrations. The only relevant detail it omits is Lawrence's wise advice about writing, scribbled on a menu card and reported by Ira Jones in *An Air Fighter's Scrap-Book*: *inter alia*, "neat, precise, plain English words . . . original metaphor and sparkling examples". For the next edition?

R.M.

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MEMOIR

Raymond Williams (1921-88)

The Return of the Sage

By George Watson

PICTURE A large face—waiting, one sometimes felt, to be carved in stone by a Polynesian—a figure somewhat shorter than the face implied, a velvety voice accentless and yet wholly distinctive, a manner unremittingly affable and confident, and a tongue ever ready with views about life, space, and time. I first met my future colleague Raymond Williams in 1959, when I was a young lecturer in Cambridge and he a tutor in adult education in Oxford, soon after his best-known book, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (1958), appeared—a late-Marxist interpretation of British intellectual life from the French Revolution to D. H. Lawrence and after—and what I principally remember from that first encounter was his glowing pride, as a young author, in the commercial success of his book which, he explained to me, as a stranger, had enormously surprised his publisher though not him. "He is taking me to better restaurants for lunch now", he remarked, exuding pleasure at a triumph at once appropriate and yet unexpected by the world. At the age of 37 he was a famous man.

In the almost 30 years I knew him, down to his sudden death in January 1988 at the age of 66, that paradoxical note was to be struck again and again: an open pride in capitalistic success and its consumer rewards, with much talk of brand-names and domestic comforts, and a deep hatred of capitalism itself and its cultural pretensions. By mid-career in Cambridge, to which he returned as a Fellow of Jesus College in 1961, when *The Long Revolution* appeared, he was to become the proud owner of two country houses—one near Cambridge, one in his native mid-Wales—and the talk was much of hi-fi, wall-to-wall carpets, and colour TV, his chief passion in entertainment being for American musicals, especially if they starred Sammy Davis Jr.

But the usual jibes about parlour-socialists never quite seemed to fit. He was so utterly open about his prosperity, for one thing: about wanting it, and wanting more of it. No man was less hypocritical about success. It suited his personality, in any case, which was always faintly affluent, though less grand than his friend and rival E. P. Thompson, so that life and thought always seemed comfortably of a piece. Thompson lived in a country manor; Williams, by contrast, was essentially bourgeois, and his talk was of shopping and gadgetry, not of deer-parks and walled gardens. Few I have known have enjoyed the consumer-society so much; none so frankly. In fact he was fond of teasing his Cambridge audiences by asking them if they had ever bought anything after watching TV commercials; and when their mouths puckered into attitudes of stereotypical disdain, he would shock them by saying: "I have, often."

This, then, is a success story, and the tale of a happy man. In fact the old Hollywood he loved might have called it *The Williams Story*—from rags to riches, and proud of it. I have seldom known anyone so fulfilled by professional life. In New York it is called "Making It", and so many socialist intellectuals have made it in the last 30 years that the story of the fat-cats of the Left might justify a volume and even a series. London theatre is by now full of them, and the film industry—some of them, like David Hare of the National Theatre and Trevor Griffiths, Williams's pupils. Most were middle-class by upbringing, more or less. Williams was not, and his claim to working-class origins—a perfectly good claim—is an essential part of his self-image, just as that self-image is an essential part of his career. In fact his books, as reviewers often noticed, are commonly about himself—a sort of continuous memoir lightly masked as cultural history. That pervasive egotism was part of his inheritance from F. R. Leavis, whom he had idolised as an undergraduate when he returned from the War; less, perhaps, from R. H. Tawney, to whom he owed rather his sense of social history. Williams is inconceivable without these masters; but his problem was wholly different from theirs, and harder. By the 1960s—his flourishing age—capitalism was not visibly failing, and there was little to justify Tawneyesque predictions about proletarian destitution or inevitable class-war. Nor was Britain at war in Viet Nam.

THOSE DISADVANTAGES, seemingly insuperable, were overcome with astounding ease. The solution was to create the image of a suffering being, glancing behind at William Cobbett and Thomas Carlyle, at Lawrence and Orwell. Williams turned history into "a continuous horror-show", as Marilyn Butler once remarked in a review (*London Review of Books*, 2-15 February 1984) of *Towards 2000*, his books all seeming to "crave the dynamics of antagonism", with unnamed forces ranged against a lonely defender of civilised values. All that is a very Leavisite opposition. But it was also faintly nebulous in its detail, so that reading Williams can be rather like watching a stag-at-bay locking antlers with a ghost. A sense of contest was somehow indispensable to him when he wrote.

Even the most secular age can need its saints, and self-canonisation can fill a need. *Modern Tragedy* (1966), for example, laid out as it is as literary history, begins with a bitter though obscure account of the author's early life and the sufferings of his (unemployed?) parents in a Welsh village, presumably during the Depression of the 1930s: but where we are, and when we are, and why we are there or then, is not entirely clear. Williams's first novel, and

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his best, *Border Country* (1960), is similarly autobiographical, the border being between England and Wales. There is no Death of the Author here, no mistaking of intention. A Williams book is always a book about Williams, and usually the better for it. This is cultural history as extended autobiography.

His justification, to speak theoretically, was that historical objectivity is in any case a bourgeois illusion. In a revealing review (in *The Guardian*, 15 April 1966) of Lionel Trilling's *Beyond Culture*, he dismissed Trilling for having adhered to the discredited liberal idea of the self in an age when individualism had been exploded. Trilling was an old Marxist who had turned conservative, but it is a common British misunderstanding to suppose that *The Liberal Imagination* (1950), that highly anti-liberal book, was in favour of liberalism, or that the word means the same thing on opposite sides of the Atlantic.

This is the heartland, at all events, of Williams's critical belief, and it is highly distinct from Leavis. The liberal idea failed, Williams argued, ". . . because by definition it was open to an infinite extension of other peoples and classes, who then threatened the learned image of the self . . .", meaning, as I suppose, a newly conscious working class and the masses of the Third World. The passage, characteristically vatic, is also characteristically high-minded, as if a superior viewpoint had been effortlessly assumed as a natural right. The bourgeois illusion is the illusion of knowledge, and Trilling is bracketed with Nietzsche, Frazer, Conrad and Freud as among a host of deluded liberals. (Not D. H. Lawrence, who in those days was supposed to be of working-class origins and thus immune to criticism, whatever his debts to Nietzsche and Freud.) Trilling's folly, like theirs, had been to suppose that individual mind can achieve truth:

> "'Culture' is the inevitable and hated social process, 'mind' is the individual, scrutinising and separate. There can be no such separation between mind and culture, except in fantasy; but this fantasy is needed to preserve a threatened identity . . . ."

Every attempt since Matthew Arnold to rationalise liberal humanism, including Trilling's, "only prolongs the illusion"—the liberal illusion of self.

THAT ARGUMENT already smacks of another age. The claim that liberal humanism is dead, or that capitalism is dying, by now looks so vastly less plausible than it did in 1966 that one realises with a shock how fortunate Williams was to live and write in his time. He was a lucky author. A sage, to succeed, should look as if he is swimming against the tide even as he swims with it, and that is what he pre-eminently did.

He knew it, what is more, or suspected it. "That is not the way the world is going", I remember his saying of Marxist predictions about the inevitable immiseration of the working classes under capitalism and the famous prophecy that revolution would begin in advanced industrial states. He knew the chief historical predictions of Marxism had been falsified by events, and clung all the harder, for that reason, to its conceptual framework.

As the years advanced, he progressively abstracted his faith. His passionate espousal of Ho Chi Minh, the dictator of North Viet Nam, whether in print or in noisy demos outside the American Embassy in London—Williams wearing a cloth cap in Grosvenor Square to assert a proletarian origin—was not a matter to discuss in later years, after Viet Nam had conquered the rest of Indo-China and become a Soviet nuclear base.

When he retired early from his chair in Cambridge, in 1983, he retired indeed, except from writing, and his name is best remembered now by middle-aged theorists like Terry Eagleton who were once his pupils. The world has ceased to move his way, as he knew, and the New Left that sprang into life in the mid-1960s shortly after he returned to Cambridge faded after the American withdrawal from Viet Nam in 1972, turning introspective and ineffectual. In its heyday it had been his theatre; he had taken his chance in it, and starred there. For Williams was that rare thing among drama critics: an actor.

The act had many turns, though they all centred on his proletarian origins and solidarity: the unquestionable sanctity of the working-class cause announced by Marx and Engels in the 1840s. The humility of a remote provincial origin was its essence, and it deserves to be retold.

WILLIAMS WAS an only child, the son of a railway-signalman in Monmouthshire, as it then was, in a village only a hundred yards or so from the English border near Hereford; and he went to Abergavenny School, a highly reputable place where he was well taught, winning a place to Trinity College, Cambridge in October 1939 at the outset of war. The Cambridge freshman was already a Communist at a time when the Soviet Union was in alliance with Hitler, and he opposed the war against Nazism in the Cambridge Union and supported the Soviet invasion of Finland. At that time, it is said, he adopted an American accent in his speeches, having seen Hollywood films and being concerned that a Welsh accent might be a social disadvantage; so a histrionic talent appeared early.

He joined the armed services, as the Army Lists show, in October 1940, which must have meant a severing of ties with the British Communist Party: perhaps because Stalin's supply of materials to Hitler after the fall of France in the summer of 1940, when Britain faced invasion, alienated him from the Party line. If that decision was patriotic, which looks likely, then this may be an opportunity to lay to rest the myth that in adult years he was ever a Soviet agent. It would be absurd to call the Soviet campaign against Anna Akhmatova a controversy, he remarked acidly in *Politics & Letters* (summer 1947): ". . . there is no controversy, in the normal sense, at all", since all the Soviet sources are saying the same thing. That sort of derision of Communist unanimity is very unlikely to have been made in public by a Soviet agent. I believe his Marxism to have been genuinely independent, though east-facing, from about the age of nineteen.

After Hitler invaded Russia in June 1941, Williams served

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as an anti-tank captain in the Guards Armoured Division, learning and forgetting a little Japanese in the process, for he was never a linguist and made no claim even to Welsh; and after the War he resumed his undergraduate life in Cambridge and completed a degree at a time when the critical prestige of F. R. Leavis stood at its height, converting into a total and dedicated Leavisite. It was here, in those post-War years, that the lasting shift from Party Communism to Culture Communism was finally realised. One or two eager but inexperienced attempts to carry the Leavisite message to literary London failed, to his lasting regret, through lack of funds—little journals in the manner of *Scrutiny*—though *Politics & Letters* managed to print an article by George Orwell; and Williams became an extra-mural tutor in Oxford, Hastings, and Oxford again, where his reputation was for a minimal performance of teaching duties: he would give his classes, that is, but would not linger to converse. And so, in 1961, to a Cambridge fellowship and a chair of drama.

Not the worst or direst of careers, one might say, in a century marked by great catastrophes: a privileged education, though not a privileged home, and a life of creative opportunities ending in affluence. Williams was an insider who loved to look otherwise; and he commonly elected, in public at least, to sound as if he belonged to the fringes of his world, or beyond them.

THE CONTRADICTIONS multiply. Though a professor of drama—the only one Cambridge has ever had—he enjoyed films of an non-experimental sort but cordially disliked theatre, especially experimental theatre, and I cannot forget his astonishment on hearing I had just been to an undergraduate play for fun, or the alacrity with which he left a promised performance by an experimental theatre company on a visit to a Cambridge college when a glance told him the room was already full.

Though avowedly proletarian, his manner could be faintly ducal; and his tweeds and voice suggested, as British men-of-letters often do, a relaxed and affable country gentlemen. And though proud of his polemics, which were always thick with the promise of intellectual defiance and political "challenge"—that favourite word—his style in books was abstract, polysyllabic and eiderdownish, so that one felt less challenged than soothed. Marilyn Butler was right to remark that he saw history as a continuous horror-show, and yet the horrors were seldom specific. But demonology matters to a sage who defines himself by his enemies, so the matter must be resolutely guessed at. Leavis's demon had been a supposed literary Establishment centred on London. Williams's, though faintly unclear, might be summed up by the resounding word "They". "They" are people with posh accents and cheque-books who think the world was made for them. That was the creative paranoia that kept him at his desk; and if his books were a trifle unspecified in their hatreds, no one ever doubted that the hatreds were vivid, lasting, and real.

His cult lay there, in a talent for an aggression at once high-minded and progressive-looking. Though he seldom if ever read a student essay, delegating teaching chores to others, or read the draft of a graduate thesis, he was often loved and seldom (if ever) hated, and his lecture-audiences found his personality gently gratifying; even pupils who spoke of his disinclination to teach commonly did so in tones wholly indulgent and forgiving, as if sheer acquaintance compensated for everything else. To ask why is to pose a question at once literary and political.

The literary aspect is that Williams, as a Leavisite, never doubted that teaching was a coterie activity based on an hierarchical relation between master and disciple. He had been Leavis's own disciple in 1945-46, after all—and in a fashion total and unquestioning, even picking up his master's habits of syntax, though never his mastery of concision, and his use of resounding bravo-words like "central". The syntax consisted of a maze of loosely controlled interpolations suddenly emerging into a resolution that one is given no chance to rebut, and as a teacher he knew, I suspect, no other style. Teaching had nothing to do with the passage of information, in that view, and little to do with imparting a technique. The critic is a moralist, not an expert, and criticism is ultimately a moral position struck and held—"Here I stand, I can no other", as Luther said; to be admired and accepted if you are virtuous, rejected or ignored if you are not.

Odd that one who so strenuously denied the sovereignty of the individual self should be so emphatic about his own, but then that is a paradox of the century by now so familiar as to appear unremarkable. When Leavis died in Cambridge in 1978, an almost forgotten octogenarian, Williams gave an admiring lecture on his dead master where he concluded that, with all his faults, he compelled admiration because he was *intransigent*. Williams profoundly admired intransigence, which counted for more—easily more—than fact or argument. He took a stand: he expected others, if they were worth anything, to take one too.

All that sounds faintly unusual to academic life, marked as it is by a readiness to discuss rather than a propensity to pontificate, and one sometimes felt that the life of a French literary *maître* like Jean-Paul Sartre, whom Williams distantly revered, might have suited him as well as academia. He sought not the curious, the enquiring or the studious, but the admiring. A university is less a place to learn, in that view, than a place to join a side, as in his day he had joined the Left and Leavis, and to promote a cause.

It was a view that found its answering call. Many an adolescent believes there are two kinds of academic—drudges who do the job, and heroes who make history. Perhaps all undergraduates believe something like that. At all events, there were acolytes to be had.

THE LITERARY ASPECT was perhaps marginal. The political was plainer, and no one ever doubted that all Williams's preferences, in books and people, arose out of that: his adoration for the sacred name of Socialism. "The only thing that matters is the reality of socialism", he wrote in *Twentieth Century* in July 1961, the

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year he settled in Cambridge. It was a dedication without reserve, like the dedication of the early Jesuits or of the Muslim hordes that swarmed across the southern shores of the Mediterranean in the 7th century. It had, however, its original, non-party aspects.

He surprisingly supported Harold Macmillan's attempt to take Britain into the European Community, for example, in 1961, as a tactic for uniting the European Left against American hegemony. It was a call the British Left rejected, in the event; and one is moved to wonder how different the world might have been if it had been smart enough to listen. It was good advice—unorthodox advice—and it went unheeded. But it was also exceptional. In essence his mind was less innovative than homiletic, less curious than committed. The truth about society is already known, already declared—much of it, perhaps all of it, by the Victorian sages of whom he wrote. The task is less to explore than to diffuse. As a preacher believes in scripture, so did Williams believe. He was a moralist. It is not that we do not know. We do. We are simply too deaf, or too bad, to act on what we know.

By the 1960s that voice, which must have felt lonely by the Hastings seashore in the 1950s, was heeded again. To be a Socialist in that age, one now needs to be reminded, was to be virtuous—to incarnate the values of a class culture which "They", by conspiracy and oppression, had striven to suffocate and annul. This was a secular sanctity. The New Left sage was briefly a haloed being to a priestless age—an age hungry for faith but incapable of a faith in anything beyond the stars.

The religious analogy is in some ways uncomfortably accurate; by the 1970s the New Left, already breaking up under internal pressures after the US withdrawal from Indo-China, was as quarrelsome as the early Church. Williams suffered from such quarrels, some of which were rancorously personal. Others were principled, as in his genuine horror of drugs, soft as well as hard; and, as a good family man, his views on sex may be assumed to have been similarly straitlaced. "They have made a false connection", he once told me sadly of youthful followers who had refused to work for a local Labour candidate unless he pledged himself to the legalisation of pot. Drugs make for acquiescence, he explained, and are therefore socially conservative.

I thought this one of his better arguments, and we were more often in agreement than either of us expected or sought. It is not true he would do anything to be popular, and there were positions on which he would not yield.

None the less popularity, even sainthood of a sort, was the constant and unspoken goal of his professional life. Perhaps my most vivid recollection is his raised hand at a departmental meeting in about 1968 when a motion, inane even by the standards of the age, was being put to the vote. Alone among senior members he supported it, turning to the young with a defiant gesture that meant "I, and I alone, am on your side". That reputation as a scoutmaster of the Left was international. It stretched to the United States, where he publicly declined a rich post in an eastern university—I remember his eyes watering with regret as he spoke of the salary and secretarial help that might have been his—on the grounds that he would not live in a nation that was fighting the Viet Cong. He lectured at Bremen University, too, the most Marxist of all learned institutions in the German Federal Republic.

All that was before the internecine era of the New Left had begun, and before his life had been saddened by the drift of student opinion from revolution in the 1970s. He had been its Pied Piper, for a time, and had loved it. But the Pied Piper led the young to a cave where they vanished, all but one who was lame and one who was blind; and the survivors of the Children's Crusade of 1212 were sold into slavery with the Moors. Nothing as dire as that happened to the acolytes of the New Left. They vanished, indeed, but not into slavery. The consumer society swallowed them up. The cult that rose so fast was a cult that fell as soon.

He never lost faith. But his faith, I suspect, became progressively harder to maintain, even to a mind more convenient than rigorous and more dedicated than questioning. If you doubt the potency of individual mind, there can be little point in thinking hard. The evidence, as he dimly saw, was mounting against Marxism. The cause of the proletariat, indeed its very existence, became harder and harder to credit. He had moved, over 30 years, from the Communist Party to the social and cultural programme of F. R. Leavis to the fierce but faintly nebulous non-party Marxism of the New Left, and so to an increasingly abstracted belief in "structures of feeling"—that much favoured phrase of his last years—and so into ever abstracter forms of cultural history vague on facts but never forgetful of obscure adolescent bitterness, the Great Depression, and the distant battles of the Industrial Revolution.

To write, as André Gide once said, you must have an eagle, thinking no doubt of Prometheus chained to his rock. Like Leavis before him, Williams never lost his eagle, and neither fame nor creature-comforts could take it from him. It was a creative paranoia to admire and envy. He was, and proudly chose to remain, an exceptional being. Like so many of the first generation who taught English at universities before him, he was a professor but not a scholar; and one cannot easily imagine him with a learned journal in his hand, still less with a manuscript at his finger-tips. He was above all that, and the usual tests of academic merit seem irrelevant, almost impious, in his case.

His mind was given to affirmation, not discovery. Less curious than committed, the central propositions of Victorian Socialism were not to be questioned: to understand them was to believe them, to believe them was to seek to understand them better. In the Old South, where I have lived, there is something called the Old-Time Religion, and Williams's faith might be called old-time Socialism. It was richly Victorian through and through. He was not a re-

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visionist. When Marx's early writings were first published in English in 1960, he dismissed them as little more than "a series of brilliant hints and guesses" ("The Future of Marxism", *Twentieth Century*, July 1961), and alienation was never his thing. The revelation that Marx and Engels, in their journalism, had advocated racial as well as class extermination must have looked to him too blasphemous to deserve an answer of any kind, and he never answered it; nor did he ever pay the faintest attention to the mounting evidence, both theoretical and practical, that Socialism can easily favour the rich by creating state monopolies they can exploit to their own ends.

As befits a Guards officer, his mind was correct and decorous. E. P. Thompson, in a review of *The Long Revolution* in the *New Left Review* of May-June 1961, scathingly remarked that it might have been written by

> ". . . an elderly gentlewoman and near relative of Mr Eliot, so distinguished as to have become an institution: The Tradition. There she sits, with that white starched affair on her head, knitting definitions . . .—and in her presence how one must watch one's LANGUAGE!"

Williams's dignity was affable, and I never saw him rude. But it was a dignity in a highly traditional mode, conscious of its ancestry, and he was proud to occupy Coleridge's room in Jesus College.

IT IS A PUZZLE, no doubt, to understand how a mind so fundamentally anti-innovative—in the purest and best sense of the word, so conservative—can for a time have acquired a reputation for radicalism. It has even been suggested, wildly enough, that he invented social criticism and the study of the mass-media. Those are not claims he ever made himself; and considering that *Culture and Society*, his first notable book, is about those who did—Coleridge and Cobbett, Carlyle, Ruskin and Arnold—it is hard to understand how anyone could think it.

He was a revivalist. Like Leavis, he knew that his task was not to initiate but to reanimate a lost Victorian tradition. Obvious as the proposition is, it is easy now to forget that the New Left was not led by New Leftists but by ageing Old Leftists. Williams was classicly an Old Leftist in a new age. He was one of the few who had kept the Victorian faith going, if only just, in the Socialist doldrums of the 1950s—a sort of Thin Red Line—and he strove earnestly to keep the lines open back and still further back: from the Viet Nam Left to the Spanish Civil War Left, and so back to a Left that Ruskin and Morris might have dimly recognised.

That is why Eliot's tradition mattered so much to him; that is why definitions had to be knitted and re-knitted. True, they kept coming apart in his hands, but then they were lightly woven from the start. Socialism, he concluded in his *Twentieth Century* article on "The Future of Marxism", means peace, freedom, and justice—which sounds as if it leaves plenty of work for future definers to do. But redefinitions, if they cannot stop the world from moving on, can at least slow down the pace of change, and Williams instinctively believed that the world of political reflection was moving too fast and too far from the verities of his mid-Wales youth. Reviving the tradition of Ruskin and Morris might help to bring them back. The question is not why social criticism revived in the 1930s and after, with Leavis and his disciples, but why in the earlier years of the century it had so nearly ceased to exist and needed to be revived at all.

I do not certainly know the answer to that question, and wish I did. It may, in part, be no more than the march of fashion, and certainly the bewhiskered Victorian sage came to look silly to Edwardian minds like Lytton Strachey's: pompous in style, empty in content, and cavalier of historical detail. In a paper read to the Cambridge Fabians in 1910, Rupert Brooke called Matthew Arnold "a recurrent figure of most excellent comic value". The arguments of the sage were seldom tight, their sense of evidence seldom scrupulous; and to reread Carlyle or Arnold is to wonder, at times, why those conclusions should be thought to follow from those premises, or whether the evidence itself is anything better than wishful and self-selected.

There may be a larger difficulty about taking the social critic seriously. In the last years of the 19th century a new race of analysts arose in Europe—J. G. Frazer the Scot and Durkheim the Frenchman will do as notable instances—who claimed for whole areas of the human sciences the status of experts, often with a battery of appropriate technical terms. An expert is something far different from a sage, and naturally hostile to his pretensions. Anthropology and sociology were not born with Frazer and Durkheim in the 1890s, but they achieved with them a new academic standing: a standing damaging to social criticism, for better or worse—I mean to the use of literature as a principal instrument of social analysis—and damaging above all to any claim that literature is central to a life of mind. The *Scrutiny* the young Raymond Williams once read as his Bible—Leavis's quarterly of 1932-53—contested the claims of such experts with valour and venom, and he utterly embraced its view. The analysts that count, it held, are not technicians but novelists, notably George Eliot and D. H. Lawrence; there can be no experts in the totality of the human condition, only the profound intuitions of great minds; and the novel, as Lawrence once said, is the one bright book of life.

THE RETURN OF THE SAGE, then, was the improbable achievement of the 1930s generation of Cambridge English, and its stance was ardently anti-expert. I. A. Richards loved to proclaim a jocular contempt for scholarship from his lecture-platforms; Leavis dismissed editing (or was it bibliography?) as "the higher navvying"; C. S. Lewis, first in Oxford and eventually in Cambridge, was famous for remarking "When will you understand that I am not a scholar but merely a learned man?"; and Williams read books and had views about them. He was nothing of an expert, and he was proud of it.

That pride has an insular ring. "Where but in England", an American professor remarked to me wonderingly, long

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ago, "can you read a book, have a view about it, and publish what you think?" Where indeed? His tone, some 30 years ago, was half-incredulous and half-admiring. If the point were ever raised again, one would have to reply, "Not even in England, now." Reading has long since given place to scholarship, scholarship to research, and the 1930s generation and its aftermath already looks remote and wonderful. The literary sage was nothing of a scholar. Anyone, he is inclined to say, can do scholarship. The sage already knows. "On the immediate which dwells in every man", as Coleridge remarked in the *Biographia Literaria*, "all the certainty of our knowledge depends."

There is nothing inherently implausible about that view. The profoundest beliefs need no grounds, being themselves the ground: one may know oneself to be mortal, one may know murder to be wrong, without seeking grounds or needing to seek. "What is to be judged by what here?" as Wittgenstein famously asked. The status of Arnoldian criticism, however, is less clear; and if sociology has not damaged it much, recent intellectual and social history has. If the Industrial Revolution did not impoverish the working classes but rather enabled them—and for the first time in history—to enrich themselves by the million, then the assumption that individual enterprise widens in equality and favours the rich may have to be reconsidered. The avowed racialism of Marx and Engels, Shaw and Wells, is not to be answered by silence concerning those passages in their writings, public as well as private, in which they advocated genocide on Socialist grounds. Arnold may not have known as much as he claimed about Victorian civilisation, and Lawrence's claim to working-class origins may not be as good as it needs to be. And if Socialism favours the poor, as Tom Stoppard once remarked in a lecture, why has Eastern Europe built a wall to keep its people in?

WILLIAMS WAS FOND OF the word "challenge". But the challenges he had in mind were of a profoundly traditional sort, and he was not much given to accepting the challenges of others. His mind was too faithful to his upbringing for that: too reverent of Victorian values, and ultimately too respectful. There is a large difference between being Left-wing and being radical, and he was nothing of a radical. His task, as he saw it, was to affirm: to accept the claims of the pioneers concerning right and justice, to fashion himself into another such, to pass the faith to another generation and another—"so distinguished as to have become an institution", as E. P. Thompson put it—and forever to knit his definitions. When he died he left unfinished a vast historical novel set in the Black Mountains in mid-Wales, where he had made his second home. Tradition was more than a theory to him. He lived it; and his legacy to old-time believers in Victorian values was a lesson in decorum where dignity, once laboriously assumed, was by the end innate.

The contradictions remain. A prophet of rural values, he would drive into the middle of Cambridge to stroll in its well-trimmed botanical gardens, which he found more agreeable than the countryside around his village home. I never saw him walk far for pleasure, and he could be puzzled by those who did: he once told me wonderingly that he never drove through Cambridge without seeing me on foot there. It was right of him to imply that the Marxist analysis of class values failed to fit my case, though I do not know that he ever troubled to consider that it also failed to fit his.

His disdain for Trilling's faith in individual mind reveals a deeper and more significant paradox. If, as Raymond Williams claimed in his 1966 review of *Beyond Culture*, there can be no separation between mind and culture—if all mind, that is, is the creature of the culture that made it—then it is not an objection to Trilling's view, or any other, to say that it can offer no rational explanation of itself. Such an explanation would itself be subject to the very limitation it was claiming to transcend. There is no point outside rationality from which rationality can be justified, and there does not need to be.

The terms of liberal individualism seemed eternally self-contradictory to Williams, but the contradiction was his and not theirs. "Every attempt to rationalize them", he wrote in his review of Trilling, "to alter the superficial terms, only prolongs the illusion"—the illusion of liberalism—and he called for a "rational discourse of sustained argument".

But all that is self-refuting. If no mind can be separated from its culture, then the minds that offered the sustained argument he called for could not be separated from theirs. And if that is an objection, then it is one that counts against all the arguments there have ever been, including the social philosophies clustered around the name of Socialism in the highly special conditions of the early Industrial Revolution in Europe in the early 19th century. What Williams thought was the beginning of a new age of thought, it is now clear, was the end of one. He was less a pioneer than an epigone—a defender, like Leavis before him, of ancient values in imminent danger of oblivion and decay.

These are not speculations he would have wished to pursue. But then it was the hallmark of the Left in its heyday, whether Old Left or New, that it made for easy arguments and encouraged a retreat from debate when debate grew too hard to bear.

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AUTHORS & CRITICS

Revenge-Plays & Editors

Revising Shakespeare—By SHANTI PADHI

THE PERSISTENCE, the bellicosity, and the erroneous grounds of Eric Sams's attacks on the editors of "the Oxford Shakespeare" merely reveal ignorance and irresponsibility. He confesses that his outbursts are motivated by self-interest and sheer pique: because his own theory—that Shakespeare is the author of an unknown play in manuscript entitled *Edmund Ironside*—has been rejected (on stylistic grounds) by the editors of "the Oxford Shakespeare".[1]

Sams seems to be proud of the fact that he has no qualifications as a Shakespeare scholar. He claims he has a fresh, unprejudiced mind and new approaches—which turn out to be ancient ones based on inadequate research. His lack of credentials is unfortunately not compensated for by any depth of Renaissance scholarship. There are numerous misconceptions, distortions, and omissions of facts in his articles. I am writing this rejoinder to correct the impression that whole generations of dedicated Renaissance scholars are really cheats and charlatans, or bully "Bottoms".

The fundamental mistake is Sams's denial of the existence of pirated play-texts in Shakespeare's age. He also denies the possibility that pirated texts could be obtained from unauthorised persons who had heard the plays frequently during performances or rehearsals, and reconstructed them memorially with the aid of shorthand notes taken at the theatre. Sams thinks that this is a "fabrication" and that there is "no objective evidence" for this "dogma" of "piratical plagiarists" (ENCOUNTER, January 1989, p. 42); that it is a "hallucination" and "disgraceful nonsense" perpetuated by "scholarly consensus of bellwether and flock" led by P. Alexander 60 years ago. He should read the complaints of contemporary playwrights, who clearly describe the process of textual piracies: e.g. Thomas Heywood's prologue in the 1637 reprint of a play, *If you know not me, you know nobody*, first published in 1605:

> *some by stenography drew*
> *The plot: put it in print: (Scarce one word trew:)* . . . .

Again, Heywood prefaces the quarto (1608) of his play *The Rape of Lucrece* with the following address "To The Reader":

> It hath beene no custome in mee of all other men (curteous Readers) to commit my plaies to the presse: the reason, though some may attribute to my own insufficiencie, I had rather subscribe in that to their seueare censure, then by seeking to auoide the imputation of weakenes, to incurre a greater suspition of honestie; for though some haue vsed a double sale of their labours, first to the Stage, and after to the presse, For my owne part I heere proclaime my selfe euer faithfull in the first, and neuer guiltie in the last; yet since some of my plaies haue (vnknown to me, and without any of my direction) accidentally come into the Printers handes, and therefore so corrupt and mangled (copied onely by the eare) that I haue beene as vnable to know them, as ashamde to chalenge them. This therefore I was the willinger to furnish out in his natiue habit: first beeing by consent, next because the rest haue beene so wronged in beeing publisht in such sauadge and rugged ornaments: accept it Curteous Gentlemen, and proue as fauorable Readers as we haue found you gratious Auditors.
>
> *Yours*
> 'T.H.'"

Disregarding such evidence, Sams argues that named publishers could not have been so dishonest as to defraud the public and betray Shakespeare for money. He conjectures that Shakespeare himself supplied the text for the First

[1] See his articles: "Where There's a Will . . ." and "Shakespeare, or Bottom? The Myth of Memorial Reconstruction", ENCOUNTER, June 1987 and January 1989; "Revisionist Shakespeare", *Oxford Magazine*, nos. 24-28 (1987); "Taboo, or Not Taboo?: The Text, Dating and Authorship of *Hamlet*, 1589-1623", *Hamlet Studies* (1/10 West Patel Nagar, New Delhi 8), vol. 10, nos. 1 and 2 (1988), pp. 12-46.

In "Where there's a Will . . ." (p. 54), Sams writes: "I declare an interest . . . ." In "Shakespeare, or Bottom?", he moans about the rejection of his ascription of *Edmund Ironside* to Shakespeare. His book *Edmund Ironside: Shakespeare's Lost Play* is said to have been published by Fourth Estate/Junction Books/Wildwood House.

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Quarto of *Hamlet*, etc. This would mean that Shakespeare somewhat dishonestly sold his own foul papers to the printers while the play was still under production and under revision. Thomas Heywood does not deny that there were some authors, perhaps in indigent circumstances, who were guilty of double-dealing and conniving with printers. But no self-respecting playwright would have supplied a garbled text like the First Quarto of *Hamlet*, which has numerous passages that could only have been copied out by a brainsick parrot.

SAMS BETRAYS ignorance when he dismisses the art of memorial reconstruction as a "myth". He is also unaware of the art of "stenography" practised in the theatre (as Heywood explains). Marston provides additional evidence in the *Induction* to *The Malcontent* (1604): "I have most of the jists of it [a play] here in my table book."

Unlike modern stenography, the system in Elizabethan days relied on "gists" and memorial reconstruction, and on simplified "synonomie" as set forth in two treatises: Timothy Bright's *Characterie: An Arte of shorte script* (1588) and Peter Bales's *Writing Schoolmaster* (1590). "Characterie" taught the art of condensing speech by the use of key-words, e.g. *song* for *ballad*, *verse*, etc. Bales devised a less rapid system of substitution and retranscription. G. B. Harrison has made a detailed study of this aspect in his preface to a reproduction of the First Quarto of *Hamlet* (1603), published in Edinburgh in 1966 in the series "Elizabethan and Jacobean Quartos". Signs of poorly-reconstructed shorthand and of words misheard, having been taken down by ear, are found on every page.

Compare, for instance, the following examples. The first in each pair is taken from the First Quarto text of *Hamlet* (1603), the second from the Second Quarto (1604), Folio 1.

. . . it horrors mee with feare . . . .
sig. B1

. . . it horrowes/harrowes me . . . .
I.i.44

[*olde Norway*] *. . . impudent and bed-rid*
sig. B2^{v}

. . . impotent and bed-rid . . . .
I.ii.29

. . . invelmorable . . . .
sig. B2

. . . invulnerable . . . .
I.i.145

ti's not the sable sute I weare:
No nor the teares that still stand in my eyes,
Nor the distracted hauiour in the visage,
Nor all together mixt with outward semblance,
Is equall to the sorrow of my heart,
Him haue I lost I must of force forgoe,
These but the ornaments and sutes of woe.
sig. B3

'Tis not alone my inky cloak, good mother,
Nor customary suits of solemn black,
Nor windy suspiration of forc'd breath,
No, nor the fruitful river in the eye,
Nor the dejected haviour of the visage,
Together with all forms, modes, shows of grief,
That can denote me truly; these indeed seem,
For they are actions that a man might play:
But I have that within which passeth show;
These but the trappings and the suits of woe.
I.ii.77-86

a beast Deuoyd of reason
sig. B3^{v}

a beast that wants discourse of reason . . . .
I.ii.150

. . . as he dreames, his draughts of renish downe . . . .
sig. C2^{v}

. . . dreines his draughts . . . .
I.iv.10

. . . bones . . . burst their ceremonies . . . .
sig. C2^{v}

. . . bones . . . burst their cerements . . . .
I.iv.48

I neuer gaue you nothing.
sig. D4^{v}

I never gave you aught.
III.i.96

But now too true I finde,
Rich giftes waxe poore, when giuers grow vnkinde.
sig. D4^{v}

Take these again; for to the noble mind
Rich gifts wax poor when givers prove unkind.
III.i.100-101

. . . Plato too light:
For the law hath writ those are the onely men.
sig. E3

. . . nor Plautus too light. For the law of writ and the liberty, these are the only men.
II.ii.381-2

. . . th'arganian beast . . . .
sig. E3^{v}

Th'ircanian beast . . . .
II.ii.428

. . . the first verse of the godly Ballet
Wil tel you all:
sig. E3

. . . the first row of the pious chanson will show you more;
II.ii.400

. . . with tongue inuenom'd speech . . . .
E3^{v}

. . . with tongue in venom steep'd . . . .
II.ii.488

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Indeede his passion would be generall.
sig. E4^{v}

He would drown the stage with tears
And cleave the general ear with horrid speech,
Make mad the guilty . . . .
II.ii.535-57

I will haue sounder proofes . . . .
sig. E4^{v}

I'll have grounds
More relative than this.
II.ii.579

. . . do you thinke I meant contrary matters?
sig. F2^{v}

Do you think I meant country matters?
III.ii.109

The actor or scribe who concocted several passages not only mangled the words and the sense; he also altered Shakespeare's noble cadence and rhythms to a prosaic level. I do not think Eric Sams is able to recognise the distinctly Shakespearean ring of verses, despite his musical work on Hugo Wolf and Schumann.

THE THEORY of memorial reconstruction, based on shorthand notes, was accepted by earlier editors of Shakespeare in previous centuries. Lord Clarendon, for instance, annotates at *Hamlet* I.iv.48, "Q1 here reads 'ceremonies' . . . this copy is probably derived from shorthand notes taken at the play" (cited in Furness's *Variorum edition of Hamlet*, published in 1877). Sams should not have maligned and lambasted modern editors as a herd of sheep following "Alexander's Conquest".

It evidently suits Eric Sams's "interests" to devalue Shakespeare's early style to lend credence to his attempt to prove that Shakespeare wrote *Edmund Ironside*. A knowledge of publishing history indicates that publishers have always been willing to exploit Shakespeare's name to promote sales. An inferior play, *The Birth of Merlin,* prints the names of Wm. Shakespere and Wm. Rowley as authors, but so far no one has been deluded into accepting this ascription. Sams refuses to doubt the *bona fides* of publishers and printers—but there are existing records of warnings given to them, and of injunctions from the Lord Chamberlain obtained by theatre managers (e.g. by Christopher Beeston, Shakespeare's co-actor in Ben Jonson's *Every Man in his Humour,* and later an influential theatre owner), forbidding all publishers from printing plays without written permission:

> ". . . Some Certificate in writeing under the handes of John Lowen and Joseph Taylor for the Kings seruantes & of Christopher Bieston for ye Kings and Queenes young Company."[2]

Prosecution was possible only after sufficient warnings. Francis Kirkman and other publishers were put in jail for pirating plays.[3] In self-defence, Kirkman squealed on his partners:

> "I, for my part, only printed three, which are my own proper Copies; and they (though I dissuaded them therefrom) made choice of the best Plays then extant; though the Copies were other mens, I thought this criminal, but they made a tush at it."

Kirkman exposes all the tricks of the trade in a semi-confessional chapter on "Ways of getting Copies" in Richard Head and F. Kirkman, *The English Rogue*, Part II (1671), ch. xxiii.

SAMS'S AMAZING ASSUMPTION that "MRA is impossible" and that there was no piracy among publishers, is made without a full and first-hand investigation. In "Taboo or Not Taboo?", his article in *Hamlet Studies*, Sams cites Hardin Craig, *A New Look at Shakespeare's Quartos* (New York, 1961): "There is . . . no evidence, that any plays were ever memorially reconstructed." The phrase "memorially reconstructed" is often misconstrued because it is a shorthand term implying a complicated process of transmission of copy, as suggested by Heywood, and others whom I have not mentioned here. Sams bases his conjectures on Hardin Craig's error—which he takes as infallible truth.

It is Sams, then, who has been led by the nose. He is oblivious of Thomas Heywood's testimony, and goes farther astray in "Taboo, or Not Taboo?", when he tells us that Shakespeare was the first person dealing with the Hamlet story who spelt the name with an "H", because his son was named "Hamnet" (so spelt in the parish register in 1585, but an error according to Sams), and he had a friend named Hamlett Sadler (mentioned in his will of 1616), and he also knew Katherine Hamlett who was drowned in the river Avon in 1579. Sams, however, only proves that Hamlet is a common name in this region. A Miss Hamlet was my neighbour in an adjoining room at 15 Chestnut Walk, Stratford-on-Avon, and I have heard of others whose death was reported in the *Stratford Herald*, but that does not enable me to claim authorship of the play *Hamlet.*

Moreover, Sams conceals the fact that Shakespeare probably drew his story from the prose translation in English of 1589-92 of Belleforest's French version of Saxo's chronicle. In Belleforest (1570), the name is spelt Amleth. But the English translator anglicised the name in *The Hystorie of Hamblet* (1589-92) published in Furness's *Variorum* edition of *Hamlet* (see also vol. I, p. viii). Sams slurs over this fact, and makes no reference to the book except on p. 41 of his *Hamlet Studies* article, where he gives it the title "Tragic History".

Eric Sams is at liberty to indulge in malicious mockery; but not to omit relevant facts.

[2] Malone's *Variorum Shakespeare* (1821), vol. III, p. 159; or see G. E. Bentley, *The Jacobean and Caroline Stage* (1941, 1956), vol. I, pp. 330-31.

[3] See R. C. Bald, "Francis Kirkman Bookseller and Author", *Modern Philology*, no. XLI (1943), pp. 17-32.

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Fatal Fallacy

By Eric Sams

SHANTI PADHI may be surprised to learn that she agrees with me about "memorial reconstruction by actors" (MRA). She rejects it in favour of reconstruction by Tudor shorthand (RTS). The two are totally incompatible; yet she has confused them. The fundamental mistake is hers, not mine. I do not deny RTS; her colleagues do.

She is also wrong about my motivation, which stems from my distress at seeing MRA vaunted as fact, thus falsifying Shakespeare's canon and chronology, and converting whole tracts of modern editions and reference books[1] into expensive waste paper. I knew that MRA was nonsense five years before *Edmund Ironside* was rejected by the Oxford Shakespeare's editors, Gary Taylor and Stanley Wells, on "stylistic grounds": i.e. their own MRA-based opinions. On the same grounds, they dismiss 12,000 world-famous Shakespeare lines as "doubtful or collaborative"; they reject another 6,000 and hand them over to such phantasms as "George Wilkins". They even reject each other's grounds; thus *The Taming of A Shrew* can (Wells) and cannot (Taylor) be by Shakespeare.[2]

They know of the massive anti-MRA bibliography that has built up since 1933.[3] Yet not one of its hundreds of counter-arguments is ever mentioned, let alone answered, throughout their 2,000 pages. Stanley Wells has publicly admitted that all MRA theories may be mistaken; yet he parades them as facts *passim*. He has known for seven years that the MRA theory offered as fact in the Oxford *Shrew* is seriously wrong and misleading; yet that 1982 volume stays on sale unchanged.

Other propagandists of MRA include Philip Edwards, Arthur Freeman, Brian Gibbons, G. R. Hibbard, E. A. J. Honigmann, MacD. P. Jackson, Harold Jenkins, John Jones, William Montgomery, Brian Morris, Richard Proudfoot, S. Schoenbaum, Ann Thompson, and Kim Scott Walwyn. Some of these—I do not say which—also admit that they are or may be mistaken. But we hear no word of public retraction. In this multi-million-pound industry, silence is golden. My own challenges, published in journals of record ever since 1983, remain just as unanswered as all the rest. Only Stanley Wells has ever attempted any rejoinder; his only defence is "We editors agree"; and even that is untrue, as I have shown.

Other academics know that our Shakespeareans have made a hopeless hash of their great subject. A. L. Rowse has been saying so for decades. He has regarded the Oxford Shakespeare all along as a shocking waste of money. But the lay public continues to trust its paid professionals. Now everything should soon change, thanks to Shanti Padhi. She has shown the world how the orthodox Shakespeare specialist habitually thinks and writes.

She answers none of my objections to MRA; she offers no ideas of her own. She just solemnly unveils the Harrisonian mysteries, and commands the mob to fall flat. Her colleagues will not welcome her heretical RTS intervention. They worship at the rival altars of MRA, sacred to such Oxbridge deities as Pollard, Alexander, Greg and Duthie.[4] In those rites, shorthand is taboo, because it profanes MRA.

IN THE REAL WORLD, RTS is evidenced and MRA is not; so the former must certainly be preferred if a choice has to be made. However, Shanti Padhi seems as unacquainted with the extensive RTS bibliography as with that actual topic. She

[1] For instance S. Wells, *Shakespeare, An Illustrated Dictionary* (1978, 1981, rev. 1985), entries "Bad Quarto", "Contention plays", "Good Quarto", "Greene, Robert", *"Hamlet"*, *"Henry V"*, *"Henry VI*, Part Two", *"Henry VI*, Part Three", *"Merry Wives of Windsor"*, *"Romeo and Juliet"*, *"The Taming of the Shrew"*: and MacD. P. Jackson, "The Transmission of Shakespeare's Text", in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, ed. S. Wells (1986), pp. 163f.

[2] In the Oxford Shakespeare, "doubtful or collaborative works" *(Textual Companion*, p. 81) include *The Taming of the Shrew*, *Henry VI*, Part I, *Henry VI*, Part II, *Titus Andronicus*, *A Lover's Complaint* and "the various uncollected poems"—some 12,000 lines all told. Another 6,000 are freely distributed among imaginary authors as follows: 596 lines of *Henry VI*, Part I to "Thomas Nashe" and 1,653 to "others" (unspecified); 1,128 lines of *Pericles* to "George Wilkins"; 1,648 lines of *Henry VIII* to "John Fletcher"; 106 lines of *Macbeth* and 902 of *Timon of Athens* to "Thomas Middleton".

For the Wells-Taylor *A Shrew* controversy, see *Textual Companion*, pp. 85, 169.

[3] See my second ENCOUNTER article, January 1989, footnotes 10 and 13, for eight examples, and my *Hamlet Studies* article, footnotes 33 and 34, for 30 more. Recent addenda include S. Urkowitz, "Good News about 'Bad' Quartos", in *"Bad" Shakespeare*, ed. M. Charney (1988), and "If I Mistake in those Foundations I do Build upon: Peter Alexander's Textual Analysis of Henry VI, Parts 2 and 3", in *English Literary Renaissance*, 18, no. 2 (Spring 1988). For my unanswered complaints about the suppression of such arguments, see e.g. my letters in *The London Review of Books*, 28 April 1988 and *The Times Literary Supplement*, 11-17 November 1988 and 8-14 September 1989. For the rebuttal of the sole official defence for MRA ("editors agree") see, e.g. my *Hamlet Studies* article.

[4] *The Merry Wives of Windsor*, ed. W. Greg (1910), p. xxxvii (MRA, so RTS not "necessary"); P. Alexander, 1929, p. 66 (*Henry VI*, Parts II and III reconstructed by MRA, not RTS, "beyond question"); A. Pollard, "Shakespeare's Text", in *A Companion to Shakespeare Studies*, ed. Granville-Barker and Harrison (1934), p. 268 (the "substitution" of MRA for RTS has enabled Peter Alexander to add *Henry VI*, Parts II and III to the MRA list); G. Duthie, *The Bad Quarto of Hamlet* (1941), p. 12f (MRA is right, RTS wrong); W. Greg, *The Editorial Problem in Shakespeare* (1942, 2nd ed. 1945, 3rd ed. 1954), p. 52f (MRA is right, hence "no need" for RTS); G. Duthie, *Elizabethan Shorthand* (1949), *passim* (RTS is wrong); W. Greg, *The Shakespeare First Folio* (1955), pp. 71, 380 (RTS scotched by Duthie and "abandoned"; MRA alone is true); S. Wells, *Shakespeare: An Illustrated Dictionary* (1978, 1981, 1985), p. 10 (MRA is true: RTS "now discredited"; G. Taylor, *Textual Companion* (1987), pp. 26, 74 (MRA, not RTS—"decisive refutations"). All of these books were published by either Oxford University Press or Cambridge University Press.

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begins with the disastrously false step of dating her own admired authority 43 years too late. Otherwise she might have wondered why G. B. Harrison failed to mention his own brilliant *Hamlet* discovery of 1923 (not "1966") in his own *Hamlet* edition of 1937. Then she too might have had second thoughts about it, just as he evidently had, no doubt as a result of reading two knock-down refutations by a real shorthand scholar in 1932 and 1935.

THE CONFUSION between the Harrison-Padhi RTS[5] and everyone else's MRA is at least understandable. Both theories share the same shamelessly question-begging assumptions about the necessary pre-existence of the allegedly reported text. This is the fatal fallacy on which all such notions founder. Shanti Padhi further assumes that Harrison's speculations—which he put forward "with considerable diffidence"—are absolutely infallible. Her loud contempt for my own ignorance constrains me to say that early shorthand is a topic on which I have often advised the Bodleian Library, the British Library, and Sotheby's, as well as historians and other researchers. I have solved dozens of previously unread samples from Tudor times onwards, including several diaries which are now being transcribed; I have published four papers so far on my methods and findings.[6]

THIS IS NOT the place for detailed technical analysis. I would offer only four observations. First, Harrison had no grasp at all of the 1588 system he invokes, and his theory is worthless. Next, Shanti Padhi's confident claim that "the system in Elizabethan days relied on 'gists' and memorial reconstruction" is equally ill-informed. In fact *The Art of Stenography* by John Willis, which needs no such reliance, was sufficiently well established to be printed by early 1602. Thirdly, the so-called "signs" of *Characterie* are signs only if the First Quarto of *Hamlet* (1603) was in fact directly derived from the Second Quarto (1604); and that necessary assumption, as in all such cases, renders the theory circular and vacuous.

Finally, that theory is itself irrational and counter-factual. The only text that could have been reported, by any shorthand system, as *Hamlet* (1603) was *prima facie* a more authentic text of that same play, in which for example Polonius was called Corambis, and Horatio tells the Queen of Hamlet's return. Not even the infinite flexibility of Bright's *Characterie* could conceivably have thus transformed the 1604 or the 1623 versions. Even if Shanti Padhi's faith in RTS were well-founded, therefore, MRA would still be ridiculously wrong, with the clear corollary that her "brain-sick parrot" was the young Shakespeare.

She has let me off lightly, in comparison. I am grateful too for her attention to my own recent *Hamlet Studies* article; but not for her inattention. The "facts" that I am alleged to "conceal" or "slur over" are her own inventions. Thus I neither say nor imply that the 1585 Stratford parish-register entry "Hamnet" was an error. I say, verifiably, that this form and "Hamlet" are alternative spellings of the same name, which Shakespeare gave his only son (1585-96). In the play's only known sources, the hero is called Amleth(us), not Hamlet as cited in 1589. That change was *prima facie* authorial. It did not derive from *The History of Hamblet*, which is dated 1608, not "1589-92", and in any event was demonstrably based on the play, not *vice versa*.[7] The facts, left unmolested, are surely significant.

I MUST NOW GIVE the lie to other baseless allegations. I do not misquote the title of that 1608 book. I am not unaware of the evidence, including Thomas Heywood's testimony, for theatre stenography; nor do I disregard it; nor have I ever rejected the possibility of shorthand (or indeed longhand) piracy; nor have I ever called RTS a "fabrication" and so forth. That is what I rightly call MRA, which Hardin Craig rightly called unevidenced. The phrase "memorial reconstruction", contrary to Shanti Padhi's explicit assurances, was never "a shorthand term"; nor is it "often misconstrued", except by her. Nor have I dispensed with a full and first-hand investigation of MRA. If anybody has ever made one, I have. My conclusion is exactly the same as that of all other investigators over the last 60 years: MRA is a myth. Nor do I argue that publishers, Tudor or other, were never dishonest. What I say is that title-pages then are far better evidence than literary opinion now.

The Birth of Merlin,[8] by William (not "Wm") Shakespear (not "Shakespere") and William (not "Wm") Rowley, is a case in point. Shanti Padhi publicly claims a superior and infallible gift for recognising Shakespeare, and pities those poor fools who dare to differ. But here, yet again, she is wrong about the basic facts; that dual ascription has been ably defended. Further, it is her own infallible opinion, not her "knowledge of publishing history", which assures her that Shakespeare's name must have been dishonestly

[5] See *Hamlet* (1603), ed. G. B. Harrison (1923, not "1966", which is the date of the reprint), pp. xii-xix; W. R. Matthews, *Modern Language Review*, No. 27 (1932), p. 243f and *The Library*, vol. IV, no. 15 (1934-35), p. 481f; *Hamlet*, ed. Harrison (1937; reprinted thirteen times, to 1966). See also Duthie (1941 and 1949) and Greg (1942 and 1955) for further specific rejections of the Bright *Characterie* theory.

[6] See e.g. Eric Sams, "Cryptanalysis and Historical Research", *Archivaria*, no. 21 (Winter 1985-86), p. 87f. The systems solved include John Willis's, of 1602, used by Bulstrode Whitelocke in 1625.

[7] See e.g. *Hamlet*, ed. H. Jenkins (1982), pp. 89-90.

[8] Mark Dominik, *William Shakespeare and The Birth of Merlin* (New York, 1985). He has issued the following challenge, which expires after 31 January 1990:

> "I maintain that the authorship attribution from 17th-century sources is correct. . . . Anyone who disagrees with this hypothesis, and who believes that he or she can provide a superior hypothesis, is invited to put that belief to the test."

Each party is to wager $5,000 and submit competing hypotheses for judgment to a mutually-agreed impartial authority. Further enquiries may be directed to Mark Dominik at 13695 S.W. Burlwood St., Beaverton, Oregon 97005, USA.

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exploited on the title-pages of plays she dismisses as "inferior", and attributes to brainsick parrots. But the title-page of *Hamlet* (1603) attributes it to William Shakespeare and his theatre company, and the opinion of Shanti Padhi (1990) is thereby massively outweighed.

Nor, finally, is it true that I impute dishonesty to Shakespeare in disposing of "his own foul papers while the play was still under production and under revision". We may all dispose of what is our own; and the rest is just typical invention, passed off as fact.

I have to stress the total typicality of all these academic attitudes, such as asserting ancient speculations as proven truths, ignoring or suppressing all the copious counter-arguments, inventing facts and dates, dismissing or overlooking historical evidence, professing infallible feelings about style, and (in the case of Harrison) keeping quiet about the refutation of one's own misleading theories. But at least Shanti Padhi has the courage of her own preconvictions, and in this she is unlike her colleagues. I hereby challenge them to do better, on their own behalf, in their own defence.

Double Exposure

The urge to incarcerate
the past in a vinyl album
or to set it bragging,
like a row of trophies

on the shelf, cannot halt
time's acid bath erosion
of memory, or disguise
the void behind the shots.

The camera can conserve
beauty, irrelevant
and flat, like souvenir
ashtrays or place mats

and betray the present
with its collection of clues;
but deception is so easy
on film, history has no future.

With my gaudy props, I am the master
of illusion, a white magician
changing lives and chronology
with a demonstrative flick

of the wrist. My audience
is enthralled. No one need ever know
of the camera's compulsive perjury
or my complicity.

But I know there still exists
that gallstone remainder of fact:
that the Cornish sea and cliffs
will endure in technicolor

long after corners have curled,
prints faded to landscape ghosts;
and that already, below
your artificial grin, claiming

to be eternal, lies
a calcified leer
while your ample shape
has been honed down to bone.

Sue Rose

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THEATRE

Discord in the Cherry Orchard

Chekhov & Stanislavsky—By VIKTOR BOROVSKY

ANTON CHEKHOV's literary career could be said to begin and end with playwriting. His stories are full of theatrical themes, and although his attitude to what he saw in the theatre remained sceptical—he criticised it caustically all his life—he was irresistibly drawn to the stage in spite of repeated attempts to part from it. On 9 June 1888 he wrote: "Great nervous strength and endurance are needed to sustain the burden of being a Russian dramatist." And indeed, he never experienced in literature the disappointments inflicted on him by the Russian theatre; his prose writings may not have received loud acclaim at the time, but their recognition was unwavering and permanent.

It was a different story with the theatre, where he was treated as a distinguished guest, an object of curiosity rather than someone from whom any great achievement could be expected: most held that he had gone into the wrong field. Chekhov, for his part, always tried to persuade both himself and others that he fully merited this reaction. On 7 March 1889, he wrote to an acquaintance: "In order to write for the theatre you have to love this work, and nothing useful will emerge without this love." And on the same day, in a different letter: "The fame of a dramatist has no allurements for me. I have no intention of writing plays."

The passing of years did not improve his relationship with the theatre, and on 17 October 1896 in St Petersburg his play *The Seagull*, presented by the Aleksandrinsky Company, failed disastrously. "The theatre exuded ill-will, the air was heavy with hatred", recalled Chekhov on 20 November. By the third act, hissing and whistling were almost general; at times the actors could not be heard. After the fiasco Chekhov left the theatre unnoticed, roaming the wet streets of the city alone until two o'clock in the morning. "I will never forget last night", he wrote to his close friend, the journalist, writer and publishing magnate Aleksei Suvorin, with whom he had been staying. Although the situation changed for the better, and *Ivanov* and *Uncle Vanya* won growing approbation, he could still write to Suvorin on 13 March 1898: "You are strongly attached to the theatre, but I appear to be drifting ever further and further away from it."

However, when the Moscow Art Theatre was set up in October that year, one of its founders, Vladimir Ivanovich Nemirovich-Danchenko, obtained Chekhov's permission to restage the ill-omened *Seagull*. Konstantin Stanislavsky's memoirs vividly describe that "soul-chilling" evening of 17 December 1898 when it was plain to everyone that not only the play's fate but its author's health hung on the outcome of the performance.

The Seagull was not the first production of the Moscow Art Theatre's opening season, but Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko always regarded it as the real beginning of all that was to follow. Many years later, Stanislavsky said of the discoveries made in those days:

> "Chekhov refined and deepened our knowledge of the life of the objects and sounds which in the theatre, as in life, exert an enormous influence on the human soul. Chekhov needed the twilight, sunrise, and sunset, storms, rain, bird-cries at dawn, the clatter of horses over a bridge and the noise of a carriage as it drives away, clock-chimes, the chirp of the cricket and the tocsin-bell, not

VIKTOR BOROVSKY *(b. 1939) is by education and profession a Russian theatre historian. He graduated from the Leningrad Institute of Culture in 1961, and in 1971 received a Ph.D. from the Leningrad Institute of Theatre, Music and Cinematography, where he taught courses on Russian drama and opera for eighteen years—the last nine as Senior Lecturer. He also worked at the Leningrad Conservatory, and has acted as artistic consultant on drama and opera productions in the USSR and in Great Britain. In 1979 he settled in England; he now teaches at the School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University of London.*

The author of "The Moscow Private Opera of S. I. Zimin" (Moscow, 1977) and "Chaliapin" (Hamish Hamilton, 1988), and co-author of "Stravinsky on Stage" (Stainer & Bell, 1982), he has written many articles for Soviet and British literary and musical journals. He is currently working on "Three Faces of Russian Theatre", a study of one of the great theatrical families of Russia, the Kommisarjevskys.

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in order to create some external theatrical effect but to reveal to us the life of the human spirit. We and all that takes place within us cannot be separated from the worlds of light, sound and objects, among which we live and which so strongly shape human psychology."

For a long time Stanislavsky was unable to discover exactly how best to correlate these multifarious elements, and he describes how Chekhov once said (making sure that he could be overheard):

"I am going to write a new play, and it will begin like this: 'How wonderful it is, how quiet! No sound of either birds, or dogs, or cuckoos, or an owl, or a nightingale, or a clock, or little bells, and not even of a single cricket.'"[1]

In their search for the key to Chekhov's plays, Stanislavsky and his actors struggled to convey on stage the connection, broken only by death, between man and the world with its currents, which perpetually and imperceptibly pervade everything. Each of us has, after all, his own "rhythm —state of being" (Stanislavsky's expression), created by the habits of individual life as each person lives it. And here we may perhaps find the reason for the comparative lack of success of Chekhov's dramas in our contemporary theatre. Modern productions can be absolutely correct, with authentic costumes and scenery, and genuine period articles used as props—yet the age itself is missing, and with it, vanished for ever, the "rhythm—state of being" which determined the conduct of its people.

Stanislavsky understood the complex relationship between man and his environment, and from this understanding germinated the seeds of his future system: for example, the notion of "physical perception". But it is one thing to perceive something and quite another to hit on the precise theatrical devices which will convert thoughts and feelings into clear forms, comprehensible to the spectator.

In Chekhov's plays—particularly the later ones, written with the Moscow Art Theatre in mind—characterisation is never reduced to typology, nor is it fully revealed in the action of the plot. Ten years after his first production of *The Seagull*, when the reputation of the Moscow Art Theatre was already firmly established as "Chekhov's theatre", Stanislavsky was still puzzling over the same problems as in the early days—how to present on stage this elusive, subtle awareness, these layers upon layers of moods and thoughts:

"In order to win the attention of the spectator without an interesting plot and without powerful acting by the players, one has to engross him in the spiritual and literary aspects of the work. But how can this be achieved in Chekhov's plays, which owe their profundity to their very vagueness and in which people often feel and think quite differently from what they say? An excessively detailed psychological analysis laying bare the soul would strip Chekhov of his innate poetry. But the lack of clarity in the psychological dimension deprives the actors of their ultimate support in the emotional side of their roles. What then is to be done?"[2]

If one reads the memoirs of Stanislavsky or Nemirovich-Danchenko, or those of the actors of the Art Theatre, one cannot escape the feeling that Chekhov was continually dissatisfied with their efforts. He seems to have given them very little help, and to their numerous questions he frequently replied: "But I have written everything. . . . I am not a director, I'm a doctor." When the actor Leonid Leonidov asked how he should play Lopakhin, Chekhov merely replied: "In yellow boots!" (However, in correspondence with his wife, the actress Olga Knipper, he did sometimes analyse individual roles and critical junctures in the plot.)

Even after Stanislavsky's production of *Three Sisters*, when in Knipper's words "both the play and the performance had created a sensation", Chekhov wrote to her (on 20 January 1901): "Well, what of it? To judge from the letters, you are all talking the most unutterable rubbish." And later, when Maxim Gorky sent him happy news from St Petersburg, where the Art Theatre had gone on tour ("*Three Sisters* is going amazingly well. It is music, not acting"), he still reaffirmed to Olga Knipper (11 March 1901) his vows of renunciation: "Personally I am completely abandoning the theatre, I shall never write for the theatre again."[3]

But new characters continued to throng into his mind: an old lady, living abroad, and her brother who stayed in bed all day because his valet had left the house without laying out his master's trousers. Chekhov took his time filling in the sketchy outlines, and three years passed from his first casual references to *The Cherry Orchard* until its completion.

AFTER THE PLAY had been sent to the Moscow Art Theatre, however, Chekhov had to submit—willingly or unwillingly—to the ideas which Stanislavsky brought to the play and the changes made by the actors during rehearsal. The divergences between the author and the Theatre were then revealed with full clarity. Both sides were pained by what took place, but conflict could not be avoided.

Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko often mentioned their troubles over *The Cherry Orchard*, and in fact their position was unenviable. Author and director had already disagreed over *Three Sisters*—Chekhov, recalled Stanislavsky, thought he had written a "cheerful comedy, but at the read-through everyone took the play as a drama, and wept as they listened to it". After the reading Chekhov had left the theatre, "not only upset and chagrined, but also angry, such as he rarely was".

Perhaps one should leave it at that. . . . For who knows better than the author how a play should be performed? But may we not question Chekhov's verdict, if only on the grounds that for the last 85 years all major productions of *The Cherry Orchard* have contradicted his wishes? Whether or not a director shares Stanislavsky's conception, he must continue the argument on the stage. What *is* the play's

[1] K. S. Stanislavsky, *Collected Works* (8 vols, Moscow, 1954-61), vol. 1, pp. 223, 270.

[2] K. S. Stanislavsky, *Collected Works*, vol. 5, p. 410.

[3] Quotations from the letters of A. P. Chekhov are taken from *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy i pisem (Complete Collected Works and Letters)*, (30 vols, Moscow, 1974-83).

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genre? Is it comedy, as Chekhov called it? Is it drama? Or is it, as Stanislavsky maintained, a tragedy?

When Chekhov began to conceive *The Cherry Orchard* in his mind, he had declared, as though issuing a warning to the Moscow Art Theatre, that it was the "director Alekseev [Stanislavsky's real name]" who was guilty of turning his plays into "tearful" ones. But was it quite so simple as that? Aleksandr Blok, for instance, wrote to his mother: "In the evening I returned from *Three Sisters* completely shattered. . . . The final act took place to the sound of hysterical cries. . . . Many wept, and I almost did so too."

So when as early as 1901 Stanislavsky heard that the new play would definitely be "a comedy", he shrewdly observed:

> "I can imagine! But I'm afraid that instead of a farce it will again be the tragedy to end all tragedies. You know he still thinks that *Three Sisters* is a 'nice, jolly little piece'."[4]

And in fact Chekhov sincerely believed *The Cherry Orchard* to be very funny: "I have made not a drama but a comedy, in places even a farce . . .", he wrote in a letter to Stanislavsky's wife, Maria Lilina, on 15 September 1903. A week later (21 September), on the same subject, he wrote to Olga Knipper: "The last act is light-hearted, and indeed the whole play is light-hearted and frivolous."

The manuscript of this "frivolous" play arrived in Moscow from Yalta on 18 October 1903. On the same day Nemirovich-Danchenko sent a 180-word telegram to Chekhov. As always, his compliments were restrained, mingled with sober analysis and practical observations. But the essential point was this:

> "As a theatrical work, it is perhaps more of a play than the preceding pieces. The plot is clear and firmly constructed. The novelty of the play lies in its luminous, luxuriant and unaffected dramatic quality. From the point of view of the general public the basic theme is not new."

Three days later came Stanislavsky's reaction:

> "I have only just read the play through. I am so stunned that I have not yet recovered. I consider the play to be the best of all the beautiful things which you have written. I send my cordial congratulations to the genius who wrote it."[5]

Olga Knipper confirmed this account in a letter to her husband written on 20 October:

> "The play has driven Konstantin Sergeevich [Stanislavsky] quite out of his mind. He says that he read the first act as though it were a comedy; the second act completely absorbed him; in the third he broke into a sweat; and in the fourth he wept from beginning to end."

Any other author would at least have been pleased. This is what Chekhov replied to Olga Knipper the next day:

> "Today I received a telegram from Alekseev in which he calls my play a work of genius; this amounts to overpraising the play and to depriving it of a good half of the success which it might have had in fortunate circumstances."

WHAT "FORTUNATE CIRCUMSTANCES" did Chekhov have in mind? Was he referring to something particularly important which he had intended to convey when writing *The Cherry Orchard*, and which neither Nemirovich-Danchenko's thoughtful appraisal nor the enthusiasm of Stanislavsky seemed to comprehend? As further irritating comments reached Chekhov, the less he came to believe in the ability of the Moscow Art Theatre to interpret his last play. People were saying that it was merely another variation on the same old theme of "nests of gentlefolk", with their occupants sliding into ruin and destruction; just more of the same grief for something lofty yet undefined.

Maxim Gorky, who was present when *The Cherry Orchard* was read to the Moscow Art Theatre company, came to the conclusion that ". . . it did not create the impression of a major work. There is nothing new in it. Of course, it is beautiful, and the public will certainly catch a waft of a certain wearisome melancholy from the stage. But what the melancholy is about I've no idea."[6]

Let us not be too severe on the judgment of Chekhov's contemporaries about *The Cherry Orchard*. At that time many thought that his art had little connection with the traditions and themes of great 19th-century Russian literature. Set beside the epic canvases of *War and Peace* or the agonised wanderings down the labyrinths of the human soul of *The Brothers Karamazov*, his stories and plays seemed merely faithful comments on the sad life of Russia. They contained no violent moral or psychological struggles, no advice on how to improve existence on this earth.

Certainly Chekhov offered no direct answers to the questions he posed. The nearer he came to his own end (and as a doctor he knew that he had very little time left), the more certain he became that no one had the right to complete the sentence: "Life, to be sure, is . . . ." "You want to know whether I am happy?" he wrote to Lidiya Avilova in the summer of 1901, soon after his marriage:

> "In the first place I am ill. And now I know that I am very ill. But whatever is happiness? Who knows it? Personally, when I recall my life, I am clearly aware of my happiness precisely at the moments when, as it seemed then, I was most unhappy."

Or take this, in a letter to Knipper written on 1 March 1903, a year before his death:

> "Whenever are you going to take me off to Italy and Switzerland? Will it really not be before 1 June? That's really trying, you know, devilishly tedious. I want to live!"

These were the years of *The Cherry Orchard*'s creation.

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[4] K. S. Stanislavsky, *Collected Works*, vol. 1, p. 235; vol. 7, p. 265. *A. P. Chekhov Remembered by Contemporaries*, edited by N. L. Brodsky (Moscow, 1952), p. 481. Aleksandr Blok, *Collected Works* (8 vols, Moscow-Leningrad, 1960-63), vol. 8, p. 281.

[5] Vl. Iv. Nemirovich-Danchenko, *Selected Letters*, (2 vols, Moscow, 1979), vol. 1, pp. 343-44. K. S. Stanislavsky, *Collected Works*, vol. 7, pp. 265, 267.

[6] M. Gorky and A. Chekhov, *Correspondence, Articles and Remarks* (Moscow, 1951), p. 153.

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Much has been written about Chekhov's difficulties at the time: his ill health, which frequently obliged him to interrupt his work, a disorganised way of life in a cold house, poor food, financial anxieties, and the serious and prolonged illness of his wife. But that was not all. As the play grew, it had seemed to resist the very idea on which it was based, and to refuse flatly to turn into a high-spirited vaudeville in which, as Chekhov said in 1901, "all hell would be let loose".

The author soon began to have doubts about how his protagonists were to conduct themselves.

> "I did not write to you about the new play, not because I have no confidence in you [letter to Olga Knipper, 20 January 1902], but because I do not yet have any confidence in the play. It has just begun to dawn in my brain like the first glimmer of daybreak, and I myself do not yet understand what sort of play it is, and what will come of it. And it changes every day."

WHEN HE HAD FINISHED *The Cherry Orchard*, Chekhov remarked (25 September 1903): "However boring it may be, my play seems to me to contain something new." The fact that the future directors of the play appeared to see nothing new in it plainly annoyed him. None the less, Stanislavsky continued to declare his love for *The Cherry Orchard*, and "wept like a woman as he tried unsuccessfully to control himself". He declared: "Anyone who does not understand the play is a fool", and when he expounded his interpretation of it to Chekhov, immediately confronted the author:

> "It is not a comedy, nor a farce, as you wrote—it is a tragedy. . . . I can hear you saying: 'Excuse me, but you know that it is in fact a farce.' Not so. For the ordinary man it is a tragedy."

At the time, Chekhov did not dissent. But later, at rehearsals, he simply could not come to terms with the fact that the Moscow Art Theatre perceived *The Cherry Orchard* as a "painful manifestation of Russian life". "I cannot remember him defending any opinion with such heat", recalled Stanislavsky.[7]

Chekhov's conduct during this period surprised those who knew him well. His anger at a note by Nikolai Efros, published in *Novosti dnya* (*News of the Day*) on 19 October 1903, which gave an inaccurate account of the play's content, seems quite out of proportion to such an error. "I feel as if I had reared a little daughter, whom Efros seized and deflowered", he wrote angrily to Knipper on 3 November. "I do not know Efros any more."

Plainly, Chekhov was extremely upset, although usually he could control himself. Something was depressing and vexing him. Was it perhaps that, in a theatre where he might have counted on being understood, and where everyone worshipped him, work on *The Cherry Orchard* was not proceeding according to his recommendations? As far back as 15 November 1887, he had written to Nikolai Leikin, an editor on the magazine *Oskolki* (*Splinters*) where Chekhov had published some of his earliest stories:

> "(*1*) The author is the lord and master of his play and not the actors; (*2*) everywhere the casting is the responsibility of the author, if he is available; (*3*) till now my instructions have been useful, and they have been followed. . . . Remember how furious Gogol was when his play was being put on! Wasn't he right?"

IN THE RUSSIAN THEATRE, however, the time when no one ever questioned a dramatist's judgment was long since past. The suggestions of the playwright, which had previously served to unify the work of the actors, no longer fulfilled a decisive role. That guidance was being replaced by the skills of the director—in the present-day meaning of the word.

The failure of *The Seagull* in St Petersburg in 1896 had confirmed that Chekhov's plays could not be reconciled with the old theatrical systems. It has been a received opinion of many Russian theatre historians that the Aleksandrinsky Theatre treated the play casually, and that its cast was not sufficiently talented. But the leading members of the company had acted in it, and had done their utmost—that is, all they could do on their own, without the benefit of professional direction in its new form. This was why Stanislavsky had listened so intently to Chekhov's remarks about the play, hoping to find in them, as much as in the drama itself, a foundation for his creative conceptions.

With *The Cherry Orchard*, however, Stanislavsky was clearly developing his own views, and his decision to disregard Chekhov's opinions signalled a turning-point in the evolution of the Russian theatre: the function of the director was being defined once and for all as an independent artistic profession. In place of the age-old prerogative of the actors to be undisputed masters of the text they were interpreting, Stanislavsky was establishing the director's right to assume full responsibility for their work, for the scenery and the costumes, and for the style and tempo of the performance.[8] Once handed over to the theatre, the play was henceforward to serve as the literary basis for those who were to stage it.

This is not the place for discussion of the eternal conflict between a play's objective essence (can there really be any such thing, when the author himself sees so much in a different light as soon as he lays down his pen?) and its fate in the theatre. Yet each encounter will reveal new points of contact when the dramatist's intentions clash with their subjective apprehension by the theatre, the audience, the critic. . . . Chekhov had already complained, during the rehearsals of *Ivanov* in St Petersburg in 1889, that he:

> ". . . did not recognise his characters and had a feeling

[7] K. S. Stanislavsky, *Collected Works*, vol. 7, pp. 265-66; "A. P. Chekhov at the Moscow Art Theatre", in *A. P. Chekhov Remembered* . . . , p. 336.

[8] It was not until 25 years later that the names of Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko appeared on the Moscow Art Theatre posters, credited as directors. It is impossible to determine their individual degree of participation in the presentation of Chekhov's play, but we know that Stanislavsky drew up the production plans: opposite each page of the script he wrote detailed notes on the staging and on the actors' moves, together with his analyses of the psychological meaning of each line.

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that it would be ruined. And yet the actors are excellent and play excellently, but they are playing something alien, something of their own."[9]

This conflict was demonstrated once again by Chekhov and Stanislavsky. The latter made no attempt to conceal his perplexity at *The Cherry Orchard*'s subtitle, *Comedy in Four Acts*. As the artist Viktor Simov's memoirs (in the archives of the Moscow Art Theatre) and the production plan for the play (published in Moscow in 1983) testify,[10] Stanislavsky had never found the plot a cheerful one. Yet this should not imply that he was unaware of its comic elements; on the contrary, at times he tried to enhance them.

The deeper Stanislavsky delved into the play, the more keenly he felt its implicit pain, and, over all, the tonality of his conception is sad. But bitterness and grief were not introduced from outside: they were revealed by Stanislavsky in the way that the action progresses. One single thing binds the characters of *The Cherry Orchard* together: a feeling of instability and lack of confidence in both present and future. Everything around them is crumbling; there is no security anywhere, as if life itself has joined in the search for an answer to the eternal question, "What shall I do?" Bewildered by the sudden demise of their world, these people do not know where to go or what is to become of them. What can one call this situation? Is it comic? Is it tragic? Is it a combination of the two? And to what genre does life itself belong?

In Stanislavsky's reading of *The Cherry Orchard*, not one character (except Yasha) could be described as straightforward. Each has, in Nemirovich-Danchenko's words, not only "manifest as well as hidden dramas and tragedies", but also manifest as well as hidden comic qualities.

THE PLAYWRIGHT and the director were not simply disagreeing over the proportions of the humorous *versus* the serious. In the play's plot, and in each of its separate episodes, the comic and the tragic are not side by side, but are intertwined. Everything that is sad is also humorous—but the humour, as it breaks through the seriousness, is far from cheerful. So a purely farcical situation, in which somebody sends a letter to a hospital about a prospective patient but completely forgets to have him taken there, ends with a slow death in an empty, boarded-up house.

"My life has passed, as if I had never lived. . . . Let me lie down for a bit. . . . You have no more strength in you, nothing is left, nothing. . . ." And as with old Firs, there is "nothing left" in any of them: "no more strength". They go off into nowhere—some weeping, others seething with fruitless energy and unrealisable projects. Each of them is out of the game, and could say in the words of the governess Charlotta: "Who I am and why I exist, I really don't know. . . ." Stanislavsky also indicated these notes of bitterness as an actor, in the part of Gaev. He "created a character whose humour made the heart contract, like the humour of Gogol's *Overcoat*", wrote the critic V. A. Amphiteatrov.[11]

FROM THE FIRST MOMENTS OF *The Cherry Orchard*, an impression of gloom hangs over the action. The house should have, wrote Stanislavsky, "a look of desolation". Throughout the play, plaster keeps flaking and falling. The sound effects, too, were carefully chosen by the director: "The howling of a pack of dogs" followed by "the long-drawn-out whistle of a train, barely audible, and the train's departure".[12]

This extensive sound score annoyed Chekhov, but he had himself "sanctioned" Stanislavsky's attempts in this direction. In the first act of *The Cherry Orchard* the author makes Epikhodov's boots creak loudly, and "you can hear two carriages driving up to the house", Dunyasha "dropping a saucer", Varya "loudly opening an old cupboard", and "a shepherd playing a pipe far beyond the orchard".

Furthermore, during the second act, the "sound of a broken string, sadly dying away" rings out in the distance, as though from the sky. No logical reason is given for this sound. After a long pause, it enters the counterpoint of the drama, as if from the heavens: it alarms all the characters, forcing them to reflect on something infinite and almost unreal, providing an unmistakable hint of impending calamity. The sound is repeated at the finale of the play, as the curtain comes down.

Poking gentle fun at Stanislavsky for his devotion to sound

K. S. Stanislavsky

[9] L. A. Avilova, "Chekhov in my Life", in *A. P. Chekhov Remembered . . .*, p. 149. *Chekhov in My Life: A Love Story*. By LYDIA AVILOVA. Translated by DAVID MAGARSHACK. Illustrated by LYNTON LAMB. Methuen Drama, £10.99.

[10] V. A. Simov, *From the Memories of an Artist*, Moscow Art Theatre Museum, no. 4892. K. S. Stanislavsky, *Production Plans* (5 vols, Moscow, 1980-88).

[11] Amph-v (V. A. Amphiteatrov), "The Cherry Orchard", in *Rus'*, 4 April 1904.

[12] K. S. Stanislavsky, *Production Plans*, vol. 3, p. 293.

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effects, Chekhov at the same time did not conceal his disappointment that the Art Theatre should have such difficulty in carrying out his stage directions: "What a trivial matter it is, but they simply can't cope with a trifle, a sound, although it is so plainly described in the play", he wrote to Olga Knipper on 18 March 1904. But Stanislavsky perfectly understood the "trifle's" significance, and persistently sought for the precise nature and strength of that sound—he had no doubt about its symbolic meaning. "We obtained a very special string, and in our judgment all went well, but Anton Pavlovich [Chekhov] was once again dissatisfied. 'It's all wrong, it's all wrong', he kept repeating, 'it should be more plaintive; somehow sadder and more tender'." Half a century later, Nemirovich-Danchenko was to say that "the famous sound had still not been found".[13]

THOSE WHO SAW the Moscow Art Theatre performance (it remained in their repertoire for decades) recalled that "the broken string" filled the air with something between the low rumble of thunder and a groan, producing strong forebodings of disaster. This premonition was realised in the third act. As if to indulge Stanislavsky—vivid crowd scenes were one of the greatest revelations of the Moscow Art Theatre—Chekhov had written the climax with "a high-spirited ball". But the director visualised a different, less attractive setting, showing signs of decay as if to indicate a life that has been derailed and become meaningless, shallow, arid. "A totally unsuccessful ball. Few people there", was Stanislavsky's suggestion. "No one knows how to dance, the food on the table is scanty, the guests look pathetic, dropping their cigarette stubs on the floor, while Firs picks them up, grumbling." There is nothing to drink, all the bottles have been emptied. "Nobody is entertaining anybody. Everyone is left to their own devices." Ranevskaya's Parisian dress makes a sharp contrast with these shabbily dressed people. Only Charlotta "is really jubilant".

At the moment of Lopakhin's victory, when he gloats that he will "put the cherry orchard to the axe" and Ranevskaya cannot hold back her tears, Stanislavsky proposed the following *mise-en-scène*. Lopakhin sinks to his knees before Ranevskaya, "kisses her hands, her dress . . . and weeps. Ranevskaya embraces him, and they both weep."[14] Lopakhin's victory is imaginary, and in Stanislavsky's view there are no winners in *The Cherry Orchard* because one cannot own what does not exist. The cherry orchard in its real significance is no more than a ghost, like Ranevskaya's mother who wanders somewhere among the trees.

The sociological approach, according to which Ranevskaya and Gaev incarnate the ruined nobility while Lopakhin represents the triumphant bourgeoisie, was alien to Stanislavsky. He did not see in them the rubble of history which must be swept away as quickly as possible in the name of a bright tomorrow: "He who believes deeply in the future is not afraid to honour the past. To dismiss it like a foe he regards as an act of unnecessary cruelty." Thus did Stanislavsky firmly define his own ethical position. He had no illusion that one day Anya and Petya would "plant a new orchard, more splendid than this one" in place of the felled trees and neglected family graves. He had no faith in Trofimov's optimistic speeches, and made this mordant comment on them: "That's how students speak when they want to be clever."[15]

CHEKHOV WAS MISTAKEN in believing that Stanislavsky did not appreciate the "novelty" of *The Cherry Orchard*. On the contrary, Stanislavsky realised earlier and more fully than others that he was going to have to stage something which could not be placed in any category, in the formal sense of the word, and whose genre could therefore not be determined.

Resisting Chekhov's designation of "comedy", Stanislavsky wanted to present a play in which the Gaevs' estate was to be sold to pay their debts, and bought by their former serf Lopakhin, not as a result of any conflict of ideas or persons, but simply because this is how things turn out. For Stanislavsky, this was not a "comedy". Comedy needs to uncover a villain and, having exposed his wrongdoings, to ridicule him. It was vital for Stanislavsky as a director to reveal the motive for the impractical conduct of the cherry orchard's owners, and he did not find their impracticality laughable. He knew that they were not perishing because of their insouciance, but that they behaved with insouciance because they were perishing.

The Art Theatre's production of *The Cherry Orchard* was a wake for a defunct age. The disappearance of these people meant the disappearance of a whole culture. This was how they had lived, thought, dressed, and argued only yesterday; but no longer. The rule is universal: what has a beginning must have an end. However, the fact that there is a rule does not make it a good one, or its acceptance any the easier.

In that vanished life there was a particular beauty, and Stanislavsky's production was full of nostalgia. The Moscow Art Theatre saw that beauty as a unique form of protection against the dangerous, confused, and exhausting bustle of an impending new era, against a vulgar, utilitarian approach to life, against all that was always linked in Stanislavsky's mind with the notion of destructive progress.

The owners of the cherry orchard, impractical and frivolous, are accustomed to living in idleness at others' expense, and have no idea what to do when they must act on their own initiative. But alongside their many faults, of which Trofimov speaks so heatedly (Stanislavsky asked Vasilii Kachalov to pronounce his words loudly, with heightened emphasis, so that the audience should take Petya's dictums ironically), the Theatre also recognised their charm, their generosity, the sincerity of their thoughts, their talent, and their capacity for love and trust. The way in which these people departed signified for Stanislavsky the brave acceptance of an inevitable fate. He was right when he wrote to Chekhov: "For the ordinary man it is a tragedy. . . ."

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[13] K. S. Stanislavsky, in *Teatr* (St Petersburg, 1905), no. 18, p. 310. Vl. Iv. Nemirovich-Danchenko, *Theatrical Heritage* (2 vols Moscow, 1952), vol. 1, p. 107.

[14] K. S. Stanislavsky, *Production Plans*, vol. 3, pp. 374, 377, 381, 425.

[15] K. S. Stanislavsky, *Collected Works*, vol. 7, p. 208; *Production Plans*, vol. 3, p. 359.

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AT THE BEGINNING of December 1903, Chekhov came to Moscow and began to attend rehearsals. "Dissatisfaction soon arose", recalled Nemirovich-Danchenko: ". . . the Theatre was not entirely in agreement with the role-casting proposed by Chekhov. He was in a nervous state; sometimes he did not like certain performers, sometimes the directors' approach, and sometimes he thought that distortions of his text were being allowed."

Everyone could see that Chekhov was seriously ill. They tried not to argue with him, but nevertheless they simply could not do what he asked. His presence brought little benefit ("he only hindered the directors and the actors"), and Stanislavsky wrote sadly to his friends that the author's arrival "had confused us all". "He used to become so agitated that he had to be persuaded to stop coming to rehearsals", Nemirovich-Danchenko recalled.

Everything connected with *The Cherry Orchard* now inspired Chekhov with hostility. Not long before the première, he announced: "I do not expect any particular success, things are going pretty indifferently." Nemirovich-Danchenko decided that Chekhov "had somewhat naive ideas about theatrical technique".[16] It is difficult to believe that this was so, but there seems to be no other explanation. Certainly he seemed not to understand the very essence of acting: that emotion cannot be summoned up at will. Only indirectly, through a complex system of pictures and images, by careful selection, is it possible to "lure" (Stanislavsky's expression) the required feelings. It is necessary to resort to devices which are often diametrically opposed but in the end combine with each other. Alongside the open, purely external characterisation runs a subtle psychological analysis of the character, proceeding (as they liked to say at the Art Theatre) "from deep within". Harmony comes later, and it needs time.

Chekhov remained outwardly amicable, but vented his resentment to his wife (24 March 1904):

> "How glad I am that Mrs Khaliutina is pregnant, and what a pity that this can't happen to some of the other performers, for instance Mr Aleksandov or Mr Leonidov. And what a pity that Miss Muratova is not married!"

The writer Aleksandr Kuprin, who saw Chekhov at that time, recalled in a letter to the playwright in May 1904:

> "I found you dejected, worried, bored, exhausted by the staging of *The Cherry Orchard*. Olga Leonardovna [Knipper], who, she said, had had to act as a buffer between the author and the director, was also in a not very pleasant frame of mind."

Chekhov did not even want to attend the first night, on 17 January 1904. Reluctantly, he agreed to arrive for the end of the third act, and during the interval there was a celebration of the 25th anniversary of his literary career. The speeches tired Chekhov—many were pompous and banal. In Stanislavsky's words, the whole affair "had a whiff of the funeral about it". Olga Knipper also thought that "there was a feeling of unease, and something baleful hung in the air".[17] The day after the première Chekhov remarked in a letter to a friend: "Yesterday my play was performed; consequently I am in low spirits." Yet the next day (19 January) he wrote that he had been honoured "cordially and generously". However that may be, if he saw anything of the play, it could only have been the fourth act. (There is no evidence that Chekhov ever attended a single complete performance of *The Cherry Orchard*.)

Lack of time had not permitted any dispelling of the doubts expressed by Chekhov during rehearsals, and the press reviews, which he read attentively, only reinforced his suspicions. As before, most critics spoke of the play's "crepuscular banality", its "sad humour", its "bitter smile".

TO THE SURPRISE of both Chekhov and the Moscow Art Theatre, the celebrated theatre critic Aleksandr Kugel took a different view. When he had read the text of the play, he felt that the characters existed "in a sort of semi-slumber, on the boundary line between the real and the mystical. They are burying their lives." But after seeing the Moscow Art Theatre touring production of *The Cherry Orchard* in St Petersburg, he came to the conclusion that Chekhov "had not been understood. . . . After my articles on 'The Sadness of *The Cherry Orchard*', I shall have to write a new series entitled 'Riotously Jolly Life in *The Cherry Orchard*'." Reporting Kugel's words to her husband, Olga Knipper wrote:

> "His opinion is that we are performing the play as a vaudeville, whereas we should be playing it as a tragedy."

The magazine *Teatr i Iskusstvo* (*Theatre and Art*), presided over by Kugel, was the most popular theatrical publication of the time. The chief editor himself, talented, witty and acerbic, was notorious as one of the leading foes of the renewal of the Russian stage accomplished by Stanislavsky in Moscow and by Meyerhold in St Petersburg. Kugel rejected both equally:

> "The centre of gravity of the theatre has been shifted from the acting of the players to the plane of staging—and staging is something purely mechanical. And this mechanical element . . . has seized a commanding position in the theatre and become a self-sufficient goal in relation to which the actors are then merely part of the scenery."[18]

The tendency towards external characterisation, which was typical of the early work of the Moscow Art Theatre, unquestionably affected the portrayals of Simeonov-Pishchik, Epikhodov, Charlotta and Yasha. To Chekhov, these characters were plainly descendants of the heroes of his vaudevilles, whereas with Stanislavsky they brought a noisy

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[16] Vl. Iv. Nemirovich-Danchenko, *Theatrical Heritage*, vol. 1, pp. 105-106; *From the Past* (Moscow, 1936), p. 227. K. S. Stanislavsky, *Collected Works*, vol. 7, p. 277.

[17] Olga Knipper, in *A. P. Chekhov: Literary Life and Works, from Memoirs*, compiled by Val. Feider (Leningrad, 1928), p. 441.

[18] Aleksandr R. Kugel, "The Sadness of 'The Cherry Orchard'", in *Teatr i Iskusstvo*, 1904, no. 13, p. 264; "Notes on the Moscow Art Theatre", in *Teatr i Iskusstvo*, 1904, no. 14, p. 297. O. L. Knipper-Chekhova, *Memories and Articles: Correspondence with A. P. Chekhov* (Moscow, 1972), vol. 1, p. 363. A. R. Kugel, "Theatrical Notes", in *Teatr i Iskusstvo*, 1907, no. 7, p. 124.

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disorder and a touch of the absurd into the play. Kugel, however, perceived some gaiety—or rather an "absence of suffering and smiles behind the tears"—in the performers of the "serious" roles, Gaev, Ranevskaya and Lopakhin. For him, a performance was the sum of the actors' work. If there was no "suffering or bitterness" in their individual portrayals, it meant that they had not played what the author had written. He could not see that Stanislavsky had melded the whole into a single composition, that a collection of eccentric traits had become a soul-gripping drama.

RECALLING THE PREMIÈRE of *The Cherry Orchard*, Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko unanimously affirmed that it had been only a "moderate" success, that the actors had not entirely understood the play on first acquaintance: the performance, they said, had been "heavy, ponderous".

This may have been the case, but of course theatrical works rarely reveal their full force immediately, and the bitterness of their clashes with the author had presumably left its mark on what they said and wrote. However, although their personal relationship with Chekhov was unharmed, and deep down both had the firm conviction that the Moscow Art Theatre had not misunderstood the play (the immediate and steadily growing success of the production was evidence of this), Stanislavsky and Nemirovich-Danchenko could not rejoice wholeheartedly. Chekhov was dying. How could they now convince him that the Theatre had presented a valid interpretation of *The Cherry Orchard*?

Having laid such hopes on the production, Chekhov, mortally ill with tuberculosis, had left Moscow in a state of profound unhappiness. With uncharacteristic vehemence, he declared to Olga Knipper (29 March 1904): "Stanislavsky has murdered my play." Twelve days later (10 April) he wrote to her again: "Nemirovich and Alekseev definitely do not see in my play what I wrote, and I am ready to give you any assurance you want that neither of them has read it attentively even once." After Chekhov's death that July, Nemirovich-Danchenko, discussing the Theatre's future with Stanislavsky, reckoned that "We lost Chekhov at the time of *The Cherry Orchard*. He would not have written anything else for us." He waited for a quarter of a century before finally voicing what they had always believed: "*The Cherry Orchard* had absorbed the best that Chekhov could give to the Theatre and all that the Theatre could offer to his work."[19]

THE STAGE HISTORY of *The Cherry Orchard* is not yet finished. Directors of the future may offer an approach closer to the original intentions of the playwright. But the Russian and later the Soviet stage have so far never managed to achieve this. Neither actors nor audiences in that country, it seems, can bring themselves to accept *The Cherry Orchard* as a comedy.

[19] Vl. Iv. Nemirovich-Danchenko, *Selected Letters*, vol. 1, p. 378; *Theatrical Heritage*, vol. 1, p. 108.

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DOCUMENT

"It is criminal to kill people for their beliefs . . ."

Dismantling the KGB State

A Speech in Moscow—By YURY VLASOV

ESTEEMED CHAIRMAN, esteemed Deputies, I represent Moscow's Lyublinskiy *Rayon* [administrative district]. From a fine garden suburb of the capital, Lyublinskiy *Rayon* has been turned into a place harmful to health. More than 100 factories are concentrated there, including the likes of the Leninist Komsomol motor works. The air in the *rayon* is bad, the water hardly better. Swimming in the river is dangerous—all norms on sanitation limits are exceeded. But not so long ago a cement elevator was commissioned; a bitumen and concrete works is under construction. What are the people to breathe? The smoke from the stacks? The urgency of the housing question is great too. In a word, it is one of Moscow's most hapless *rayons*. After all, there is also a foundry and engineering works operating in the centre of the *rayon*. Its main technological process has remained unchanged since pre-revolutionary times. This is a crime against the workers—especially women—and a crime against the whole of Moscow.

The state has got used to taking people's strength and health and to compensating them in a particularly inadequate fashion—at times insultingly and dangerously inadequate. This refers equally to earnings, pensions, and medical provision. Incidentally, the prices of medicines ought to be reduced altogether, and without delay. At times people cannot afford treatment. We pronounce great principles but, in essence, exploit people. People are fed up with promises of a better life and resolutely demand changes. The worker does not want to allow any further fall in the standard of living and is not going to allow it. That is why we are here. So far the people still trust us. After all, the people are not demanding much. They only want one thing—to be treated like human beings.

Esteemed Deputies, I am not an economist. The main subject of my address is the democratisation of our life. Democracy feeds and clothes people as practically as the economy does. That is natural. Two such phenomena are organically connected. [*Break in transmission.*] . . . And that's what I would like to talk about now.

My speech is not determined by anybody. I have not attended meetings of "the Moscow group". Anyway, I am not a great lover of attending meetings. And this speech is not made from "the semi-finished products" [ill-thought-out plans] which Deputy Gorbachov mentioned in connection with the Moscow group. But I am in the Moscow group and *with* the Moscow group. That is a fact, and I am proud of it.

A very minor observation. Since on Saturday 27 May we finished our work comparatively early, we had an opportunity to watch a television account—not a report, but an account—of the Congress. The focal point of the day was Yuri Nikolayevich Afanasyev's speech. His speech, Popov's

THIS CONTINUES *our series of extraordinary documents which have emerged in the intellectual turmoil of the Gorbachov era of "Perestroika" and "Glasnost". Among previous articles in* ENCOUNTER *are Chingiz Aytmatov, "The Age of Repentance" (April 1989); Sergei Eisenstein and Nikolai Cherkasov, "A Conversation in the Kremlin" (February 1989); Vladimir Kobrin, "Stalin as an Historian" (February 1989); Fyodor Burlatsky, "Brezhnev's Words" (January 1989) and "Why Khrushchev Failed" (May 1988); and Tamara Motolyova, "Why Did Romain Rolland Keep Silent?" (June 1988).*

The contribution by YURY VLASOV, *which constitutes the text of his unprecedented speech indicting the KGB (delivered in the Congress of People's Deputies on 31 May 1989), is perhaps the most electrifying statement of them all. The fact that Vlasov was a former USSR Olympic weight-lifting champion (in Rome and Tokyo) attracted special attention, and the "New York Times" correspondent reported that the deputies had been "stunned", that "Vlasov's boldness drove hundreds in the hall to rise in thunderous applause while others—including Mr Kryuchkov [Vladimir A. Kryuchkov, head of the KGB]—sat in startled silence. . . ."*

In 1953, when Vlasov was seventeen, his father—a committed Communist and a Soviet diplomat in China—had been summoned to the State Security office; he never returned. As a Soviet athlete, Vlasov has been critical of the use of drugs in sport, and in 1987 wrote an article charging Soviet athletes with their use. He was promptly denounced in "Pravda", and was subsequently eased out of the chairmanship of the Institute of Athletics which he had founded.

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speech, and also all speeches supporting him were rendered in summary form—that is, with significant omissions. It was very complicated to formulate a clear, logical idea about their position. But the opposing point of view was rendered in detail—speech after speech by the Deputies themselves. I appeal to those responsible for the *Vremya* programme [the main evening television news]: are you really not aware that that was a distortion? In the same programme, on the very same day and at the same time, you report that, according to a poll, 62% of people are against the Congress blocking the decisions of the Moscow group, the proposals of the Moscow group.[1] And in reporting this you are at once involved in a juggling of facts; that is, you go against the majority of the people—the 62%.

I am not in favour of a split. But it is a mistake to think that the Congress is being pushed into a possible division by some malicious intent. Everything is much simpler than that. Every action causes a reaction. In this instance the process is reciprocal.

And one more observation in passing. The post of the Chairman of the State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting is so important that it cannot be overestimated. Its influence on people's minds is staggering and all-embracing. There is no more powerful tool of restructuring. We are to approve the appointments to such important posts as, say, the Chairman of the Committee for Supervision of the Constitution. I propose that this list of posts to be approved also include those of candidates for the Chairman of the State Committee for Television and Radio Broadcasting. [*Applause.*] Such appointments should be a prerogative—that is, an exclusive right—of the Congress. For the same reasons I propose that the appointment to the post of Editor-in-Chief of *Izvestiya* also be the prerogative of the Congress. [*Applause.*] Such important posts cannot be left to the apparatus.

We have agreed not to mention the events in Tbilisi[2] before the commission reports. This ties our hands. Well, let us put our opinions aside and wait. But in this tragic story another fact comes to the surface, which we cannot fail to mention. Since the very first day of the work of the Congress, there has been, in this hall, muted questioning of the country's leading responsible and Party figures: who was it that gave the order for the massacre? Deputy Gorbachov's reply led to the necessity to set up the present commission. Under no circumstances can it be admissible for the head of state not to know all the circumstances of an event—otherwise, what kind of a head of state is he? It is also inadmissible that this was not known, and is *still* not known, by the members of the Politburo. Note that no one gave an answer to the persistent questions from at least a dozen Deputies—though silence itself is already an answer. [*Applause.*]

No. [*Applause.*] No, I am not talking about concealing an important fact from the Congress of People's Deputies. I am talking about something else—about the need to include in our Constitution an article on impeachment, meaning depriving the Chairman of the Supreme Soviet of his powers as a result of concealing the truth from the people. [*Applause.*] What I am saying is of considerable importance for the future. The head of state must be fully aware of whom he is with—with a corporation of officials, or with the people. [*Applause.*]

And now for the responsibility of the government. This has already been talked about. Fears were expressed then that we had lived through ten hours without authority, until the head of state was elected. The country was threatened with possible disasters during those hours. The majority of us have realised what sort of man Brezhnev was and how he ruled the country. Lack of principle . . . participation in unlawful actions . . . and, more often, fear . . . forced people to keep quiet and not to think about the possible disasters, although one of them turned into the grief of war [i.e. Afghanistan]. Brezhnev could have been absent, not for ten hours, but for ten years, and hardly anybody would have noticed. The overwhelming majority of the present Politburo members and members of the government occupied fairly prominent positions during those years. But, as you know, all responsibility is now written off with one infinitely all-embracing phrase: "We have all left that time behind. . . ." I am categorically not in agreement with it, for not all of us have done so; but this is not what I am talking about now.

We have already moved four years away from the start of Restructuring, and everything which is happening in the country now is, to a significant degree, the result of the direct activity of our leadership. The richest country in the world is making ends meet in peacetime on "coupons", which are the equivalent of ration cards. We do not have the most basic products. Our rouble is pitiful compared with any hard currency. There is much corruption, unlawfulness, and arbitrariness in the country. The land is drowning in irresponsible decisions. A great country has been humiliated. It is impossible to fall any lower . . . the next thing is disintegration. People who are guilty of such a turn of events usually resign, and not individually, but all together, as people who have made a mess of things! [*Applause.*] That, in any event, is customary throughout the world.

It has been said here that normal government activity is impossible without strict checks. The Supreme Soviet possesses such powers: it is an executive and regulatory body. It is necessary for Deputies to learn to ask questions of the government. Every two or three weeks, say, the government will account for its activities—that means democratic and

[1] "The Moscow group", now better known as "the inter-regional group", was founded by Boris Yeltsin, Andrei Sakharov, the historian Yuri Afanasyev, and the economist Gavril Popov Viktor Palm. It comprises more than 300 members of the Congress of People's Deputies and, with its ambitious, almost social-democratic programme, is considered an "alternative political force". Its demands include the removal from the Constitution of Article Six, which assures "the leading role" of the Communist Party.

[2] "The Tbilisi massacre" took place on 9 April during demonstrations demanding sovereign independence for Georgia (and suppression of the Abkhazians). According to official Soviet sources, 21 Georgians died and several hundred were injured, some by a poisonous gas so far unidentified. On 24 December 1989, a resolution was passed by the Congress of People's Deputies condemning "the use of force against the participants in the demonstration".

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foreign policy, the economy, etc.—at sessions with televised coverage. There must be no secrets from the people, and each person must appear before them in his true form.

We see that, even with the current turn of events, the government is not resigning. There are serious grounds for this. The supreme authority has always been propped up by that force which supports the whole apparatus-based system. Why was Brezhnev able to govern our country? No! It wasn't Brezhnev who governed it—he was merely a symbol. It was force which governed, and it became confirmed in our country as the sole legal norm. Force, fear, and intolerant cruelty permeated our life, were exposed nerves in our lives and are not allowing us to straighten ourselves up even now. Intolerance is also present in this hall, as a sign of all those years. It is present in chicanery and attempts to shut up an orator.

For the people, "Restructuring" means, along with overcoming the economic crisis, overcoming the apparatus-based system. This system has been totally governed by principles of crushing the individual, of personal lawlessness on a massive scale, and, consequently, of lack of protection. We are still carrying a great deal of falsehood around with us. Yes, we have *Glasnost* now, but we shall not die of grateful respect for its having been granted to us.

Democracy ought to be developed. It is the guarantee of our strength and—the main thing—of our future. We cannot, and must not, make our future dependent on the moral questions of one personality. We must give legal and democratic administration to the people and overcome the economic crisis. That is possible only if we construct a clear legislative right: the right to ask questions of the people who represent the government in this hall, to ask questions of them and of those who stand behind them. That is what the people will require. [*Applause.*]

This is from an appeal made by a group of electors. The weekly journal *Semya* and Central Television have talked about and shown places where victims of the mass repressions are kept. These are the Donskoye cemetery, and also the Kalitnikovskiye and [?Rabocheskoye] cemeteries in Moscow: places where the rights of tens of thousands of our fellow citizens are entombed. Comrade Gorbachov said at a meeting of the CPSU Central Committee with scientific and cultural workers on 6 January this year that we need to single out these places, to put them in order, and to set up monuments. The appropriate resolution has been passed by the CPSU Central Committee, but no real steps have been taken in our city. Why?

The search led to other places where skulls and bones lie in their thousands. We are bound to honour the memory of our fellow citizens who were subjected to mockery and execution. These are tens of thousands of our people, executed in their innocence. Such crimes are unknown in the history of mankind. Undoubtedly, substantial assistance could be rendered by further searches in the archives of the *KGB*. But even today they are firmly closed and hundreds of thousands of our families cannot honour the memory of those wrongly executed or tortured. Isn't it time to resolve this question?

IN ORDER TO LIMIT the sway of the apparatus, it is essential to place one of the most powerful sources of its viability under the control of the people. With one wing the *KGB* protects the people from the external enemy and with the other—incomparably the most powerful—it carried out a special, specific function. No, I don't have in mind "the fight against corruption". After the hard lessons of the past, with millions killed—all of them, without exception, with the direct participation of the *Cheka* and the *MGB* [predecessors of the *KGB*]—the threat to democracy cannot, even in our days, be considered mythical.

Outside the Lubyanka

Moscow

RIOT POLICE wielding rubber truncheons repeatedly charged and clubbed demonstrators last night [30 October 1989] after a candlelight vigil for Stalin's victims outside the Lubyanka *KGB* headquarters developed into a protest march through central Moscow. Scores of protesters were knocked to the ground and dragged or carried into police buses during the two-hour unsanctioned demonstration. The vigil outside the Lubyanka had official permission. It was the harshest treatment of protesters seen in Moscow since President Gorbachev introduced a more permissive political climate.

THE OFFICIAL *Tass news agency said about 40 demonstrators were detained. It blamed the violence on the Democratic Union opposition movement. Tass said the purpose of the unsanctioned march was "to create as much disruption as possible, to display anti-Soviet posters and shout anti-Soviet slogans". Yuri Mityunov, a spokesman for the Democratic Union, said demonstrators were forced to take refuge in courtyards.*

> **"Special police caught them there and they were beaten. The special police have adopted a new tactic—terror for the sake of terror. Their goal is to scare the people."**

About 1,000 demonstrators had converged on the KGB's headquarters after dusk to mark the unofficial Day of the Political Prisoner and to mourn the millions wrongly imprisoned or killed under Stalin.

THE HOUR-LONG PROTEST, **in which two rows of people holding flickering candles lined up on three sides of the building, passed off peacefully. At the end of the demonstration, about 500 people, mostly young members of the Democratic Union, marched towards Pushkin Square, a favourite site for human rights activists.**

As they chanted "*Shame on the KGB!*" and "*The KGB is the Enemy of the People!*" they were confronted by riot squads. White-helmeted police, armed with long black rubber truncheons, waded into the protestors, clubbing at least four of their leaders to the ground, then dragging them into nearby police buses.

The demonstrators, whose ranks had swollen to about 800, retreated, then reformed and headed towards Gorky Street, the main throughfare leading to Pushkin Square. They were again charged by the riot police.

John Iams
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At a time when the first steps are being taken along the road of democratisation, when at the same time people wish to nourish it, such a force acquires a special meaning. The *KGB* is subordinate only to the apparatus. The *KGB* has been taken from the control of the people. This is the most closed, most secretive of all state establishments.

Of course, I do not have it in mind to slander the staff of this department. At issue is its role in our life. The deep secrecy explained by the specific nature of its occupation guarantees effective lack of control of the *KGB*, although its activities are at times most dubious. In such conflicts with the *KGB* the truth cannot be found, and it is dangerous to look for it. Manipulations with alleged "psychiatric abnormality" can still threaten people who are dangerous for the apparatus.

The democratic renewal of the country has not changed the place of the *KGB* in the political system. This committee carries out the all-encompassing supervision of society, of each individual. In the system of ministerial relations it is manifestly placed above the state, subordinate only to a narrow group of the apparatus.

THE APPOINTMENT of the Chairman of the *KGB* should go through the Congress of People's Deputies. People's Deputies should know the size of this organisation, demand an account of every violation of the law and they should know its budget. [*Applause.*]

And it would be better to shift the *KGB* offices from Dzerzhinsky Square.[3] For the bloody history of the main building, where the sword protecting the people rests, is quite unforgettable. Over the course of decades orders were issued from here for the elimination or persecution of millions of people. Sorrow, groans and suffering were sown on our native land by this agency. In the depths of this building they tormented and tortured; they destroyed the best, the pride and light of our peoples. And this same complex of buildings, so inexplicably monumental and grandiose, seems to bear witness as to whom, in reality, power belongs in this country. Such a complex is out of place in the centre of Moscow. It would be just if the *KGB* were to give up this building—we have an immense need of premises, if only for libraries—and build a modest building in the suburbs. But not one like the *KGB* hospital in Pokrovskaya Streshnya, where an huge, ultra-modern building, linked to central Moscow by a branch of the Metro, stands in a pine forest. In the neighbourhood is the *rayon*'s tuberculosis hospital—simply a squalid building.

The *KGB* is not a service, but a real underground empire which has not yet yielded its secrets—except for opening up the graves. And in spite of such a past, this empire preserves its special, exceptional position. It is the most powerful of all the weapons of the apparatus. Both in effectiveness and efficiency, it has no equals.

[3] Moscow's Dzerzhinsky Square was named after Felix Dzerzhinsky, first head of the *Cheka*. He also gave his name to Warsaw's Dzerzhinsky Square, where in November 1989 his statue was destroyed by Polish demonstrators.

It has been proposed that there should be a commission in the Supreme Soviet for the protection of state security—one must assume by controlling the activities of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the *KGB*. The Ministry of Internal Affairs, too, has not left the best traces in our history. It is essential that this commission should be filled with new substance and that it should carry out effective control. This is one of the essential tasks—not easy to accomplish, it is true—of the USSR Supreme Soviet and of future congresses of People's Deputies.

And here is yet another appeal by the voters of my constituency. I received it yesterday. It concerns the state statistics.

The Congress of People's Deputies considers that in recent years the USSR Statistical Committee has been one of the state organisations whose activity has promoted the manipulation of public opinion by false figures which have embellished reality. The USSR Central Statistical Directorate has, to this time, not demonstrated the ability to achieve a reduction in the stream of questionable bookkeeping which state bodies impose on enterprises and institutions. The Congress decrees this draft proposal: to set up a Commission from People's Deputies within the framework of the Supreme Soviet. And this Commission is to work until the true state of affairs in the economy is revealed, including revelation of the true dynamics of national income, of inflation processes, of the levels of pollution emissions, of the growth in labour productivity, and of the reduction in the state apparatus. And the results of the work of this Commission should be broadcast to the people.

The elections of People's Deputies bear a fundamental significance, and they should take place not every five years but every three years, with the elections direct and secret for all. The political development of the people is proceeding at such a pace that the current composition of the Congress will not fully reflect those changes. Figuratively speaking, a five-year term will block many important decisions which are so needed by the people.

WE ARE AT a critical moment in our development. One hundred and fifty years ago, Peter Chadayev, a Russian thinker of great originality and a friend of Pushkin, wrote about Russia: "We are a singular people, we belong among the numbers of those nations which seem not to belong to the body of humanity but merely exist . . . ." There must be no more terrible lessons. [*Applause. Bell rings.*]

One moment. It is criminal to kill people for their beliefs. So now I will say a few words about yesterday's ovations in the halls about the news of the use of force in Tbilisi.

It is criminal to kill people for their beliefs. Slogans and political divergence, not to mention dissidence, cannot serve to justify killing. Such a position blends in with the one which led our country to commit killing on a scale unprecedented in the world and which we are still unable to fathom in our minds and consciences. After such ovations, it is evident to me that division is, in practice, inevitable. More divides us than joins us. This is a division and divergence in understanding the very basis of life. [*Applause. Some deputies give Vlasov a standing ovation.*]

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LETTERS

"Indexes" Indeed!

THE latest ENCOUNTER has just arrived here in New Guinea, and I am enjoying its erudition as the monthly treat it always is.

Our other main source of cultural influence here is the Australian Broadcasting Commission, whose satellite TV we receive. Australian productions sometimes show a lack of that sense of history and commitment to standards which I associate with the BBC—and ENCOUNTER, of course.

Not least of my complaints is their lack of understanding of the roots of the English language, and the solecisms that result. This is shown particularly by the plurals they permit to be used with words of Latin derivation. In a quiz programme, the "correct" answer to the question "*What is the plural of 'radius'?*" was "*radii*". Fine. Except that they allowed someone on a gardening programme to talk about "*gladiolies*"; on a science programme, to talk about "*antennas*"; and so on. (They have a write-in programme called *Backchat*, and you may imagine what blasts of scorn I have written to it.)

But now the ground is cut from under my feet. ENCOUNTER advertises its "*Indexes*"! Here am I, asking consultants for their "*Curricula vitorum*", after painfully dragging my memory for Latin declensions learned at grammar school 40 years ago, and that most cultured of magazines ENCOUNTER lets me down.

Do you too subscribe to the BBC's thesis in *The Story of English* that "Anything Goes", and there are no standards any more? I have not had an opportunity to check what the new *OED* has to say on the subject. No doubt it claims to reflect usage passively, rather than to set standards as a reference book should. I do not disagree that there is a case for eliminating the confusing irregularities of our language, provided one can accept the plural of "*man*" as "*mans*".

Please feel free to criticise my English (as above, *passim*).

EDWARD S. WEBBER

Boroko
Papua New Guinea

ED. NOTE: In self-defence, we quote from *The Times* (10 November 1989), where Bernard Levin reports:

> "There is a highly professional body, The Society of Indexers—of which I am a member, *honoris causa*, because although I do not compile Indexes (oh, no, you must NOT call them Indices), not even my own, I have defended the profession and its integrity. . . ."

He criticised a recent faulty index of the Oxford University Press, and demands as reparation "the sum of £500 to be given by the OUP to the Society of Indexers, to be wholly devoted to the relief of indexers who have fallen on hard times. . . ."

The Seville Statement

THE SEVILLE DECLARATION on violence, which Robin Fox condemns with such vehemence in his article "Anthropology's Auto-da-Fé" (ENCOUNTER, September-October 1989), is a fascinating example of sloppy thinking by well-meaning scientists, shot through with the unexamined assumptions of liberal humanism. I do not dispute Fox's major objection, which is that the "correctness" or otherwise of scientific propositions is something to be validated through research and debate, in a spirit of open inquiry, rather than laid down in the form of prescriptive resolutions authorised by majority ballot. However, it is the content of the Declaration that worries me, just as much as (if not more than) the manner in which it seeks legitimation. Most reasonable people will surely agree that it is indeed "scientifically incorrect" to make the kinds of assertions identified as such in the Declaration, not because they have been falsified by empirical evidence, but because they are so incoherent as to be incapable of verification in the first place. The trouble is that the alternative propositions that the Declaration aims to put in their place are equally vacuous.

CONSIDER, for example, the proposition that warfare "is a product of culture". Now in fact it is people who wage war, not cultures, as the Declaration would have it. And one can no more apologise for war on the grounds that it is culturally determined than on the grounds that it is genetically determined, or even on the grounds that it is determined by some critical combination of genetic and cultural attributes. All of these are merely ways of off-loading the responsibility for the initiation and conduct of war from purposive human agents on to hypothetical genetic and cultural elements, or "traits", which allegedly pull all the strings, controlling the conduct of their individual carriers. Likewise, the propositions that "the interaction between [human beings'] genetic endowment and conditions of nurturance . . . determines their personalities", and that "how we act is shaped by how we have been conditioned and socialised" amount to an absolute denial of human agency in the making of history. If these propositions were true, and given that our history includes episodes of chronic warfare, we could hardly hold ourselves to blame for it. Blame our culture, blame our genes, blame our environment, but do not blame *us*, they say, for we are but "determined" and "conditioned" beings, powerless to act against the forces that shape our personalities, our actions, and our consequent destinies.

THE CONCLUDING flourish of the Declaration, that "biology does not condemn humanity to war", invites reflection on the meaning of all three key terms—biology, humanity, and war. I do not pretend to know what the signatories to the Declaration mean by biology. This concept, far from denoting the science of living organisms, appears to imply some composite notion of human nature, including what humans have in common with other animals, what is universal rather than variable between populations, what is individually innate rather than a product of socialisation, and what is acquired by learning rather than genetically transmitted. Thus the

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meaning of biology is constituted by its opposition to culture, which in turn is taken to be the essential attribute of humanity. The uniqueness of our species is conceived in terms not of differences within nature, but of the transcendence of culture—as the source of all difference—over nature, rendered uniform by comparison. Such a view of humanity or "the human condition", as split between the opposed worlds of nature and culture, emotion and reason, instinct and art, is deeply rooted in the Western philosophical tradition, and is reiterated in several clauses of the Declaration. It is, of course, quite at odds with the identification of humanity with the biological taxon, *Homo sapiens*, which is defined on genealogical grounds rather than in terms of some essential state of being. Finally, there is the question of what the Declaration means by "war". It appears to be regarded as a type of violent behaviour, though throughout the text the terms war, violence and aggression are used interchangeably and indiscriminately. I do not think the understanding or prevention of war will be advanced one iota by lumping it together with such disparate phenomena as, say, child sexual abuse and football hooliganism.

SO LONG AS we remain caught within the antinomies of culture and biology, humanity and nature, I do not believe we shall ever achieve a real understanding of why humans wage war. In that respect the view advocated by Fox, that we should look for "the biological components" as well as "the cultural components" of war, will not take us any further than the recommendations of the Seville Declaration. For war is *not* a kind of behaviour, and we shall not find its causes by appeal to the behavioural propensities, personality characteristics, or cognitive orientations of individuals, whether innate or acquired—although these may indeed tell us something about the mechanisms by which it is carried on.

We have rather to recognise that war is a *condition of the relationships* between human social groups. Such relationships both give purpose and meaning to the practical activities of human subjects, and are themselves generated or transformed through these activities. Only by focusing on the dynamic properties and transformative potentials of the total fields of social relationships within which all of us are enmeshed can we grasp the measure of human responsibility for war, and the possibility, through our own creative efforts, of putting an end to it.

TIM INGOLD
Department of Social Anthropology
University of Manchester

THERE IS, one hopes, some reason to believe that the prospect of global war is receding a little. Three years ago, however, East and West were adding arms to arms, thereby increasing the risk of war and decreasing both the standards of living of their own people and the aid they were able to give to the Third World. Politicians and others had to justify this arms race, and to do so they often implied that humankind (though usually specifically the other side) is intrinsically and inevitably aggressive. Believing this view to be wrong, a group of biological and social scientists (of which I was a member) met in Seville and produced a Statement summarising their views. Robin Fox, a well-known social scientist, has written an article (see "Anthropology's Auto-da-Fé", ENCOUNTER, September-October) attacking this "Seville Statement".

I was saddened when I first read Fox's article. Its polemical style, its denigrations of the signatories of the Statement as "agents of righteousness", "luminaries" or "savants" engaged in a "heresy hunt" did not seem worthy of a distinguished academic. Moreover, it seemed to be based on a misreading and misinterpretation of the Statement, and to seek for differences where none existed. At that time, I preferred not to reply. But now that he has allowed the article to be published at least twice (and one of his earlier statements, reprinted in it, four times) a reply is called for.

Fox repeatedly emphasises that he does not disagree with the *content* of the Statement, though he does make some minor comments on the wording, and with some of the latter I agree. He also professes to accept the thesis which underlies the five points of the Statement, namely that the "complex outcomes of the interactions of our genetic predispositions and our socio-ecological-cultural environments are not 'in our genes'" (though he often lapses into a more primitive way of thinking, as I shall point out shortly). Instead, he attacks the "arrogance" of the Statement, and its supposed implication that scientific truth can be established by fiat.

LET US START with the former point. The Statement presents "our position" (i.e. that of the signatories) "in the form of five propositions". ("Propositions" was understood to imply a "statement", "proposal", or "scheme proposed" or put forward for consideration, as in the *Concise Oxford Dictionary*). Is there anything arrogant about that? In its preamble, the Statement recognises that science is a product of culture and cannot be definitive or all-encompassing. Is there anything arrogant about that? Each proposition starts with the words "It is scientifically incorrect to say . . .", which this signatory took to imply agreement among the general body of scientists. But, quite properly, the small group of signatories tested their view against those of colleagues and, later, some of them accelerated this process by asking learned societies to endorse the Statement. Again, quite properly, some of those societies sought the opinions of their members. There was nothing sinister about this, and certainly it was not "an arrogant insistence that scientific disputes could be determined by majority votes of institutional memberships". It was simply an attempt to find out whether the "position" adopted by the small group in Seville was representative of a wider range of scientists, and if so, to publicise it.

IN HIS EAGERNESS to attack the Statement, Fox misquotes it in many places. To cite but a few, the Statement does not claim that acceptance of the Statement's message will bring peace on earth, but talks cautiously of "the transformative tasks necessary" in the years to come. It does not claim that scientific disputes can be settled by votes. It does not claim that war is "culturally rather than biologically" caused. These words, placed in quotes by Fox, do not appear in the Statement, though the Statement does claim (in my view correctly) that war as we understand it is a product of culture. And it does not imply that war has "no biological components".

The last point is important, and may be at the root of the misunderstanding. Fox would, I believe, agree that culture is a product of human propensities that have been shaped by natural selection, and that culture both affects and is affected by the characteristics of individuals. He would, I believe, also agree that particular aspects of culture, such as the institution of war, are not a direct consequence of particular genes, but rather of a complex interplay between individuals of somewhat diverse genetic make-up with their environments, the latter including the beliefs, myths, institutions, etc. found in the group to which they belong.

The five propositions of the Seville Statement apply this principle to aggressive behaviour. Thus the Statement argues that it is incorrect to say that we have inherited a tendency to make war (because war has cultural determinants), that war is genetically programmed into our nature (because the sequelae of our genetic consitution depend on environmental factors), that there has been selection for aggression more than for cooperation (cooperation is an essential part of our social life), that we have a violent brain

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(though our brain has the potential for producing violent behaviour), or that war is caused by an "instinct" or any other single motivation (a claim indisputable in view of its complex social nature).

Now an interactionist approach is conceptually more difficult than thinking in terms of dichotomies. And, as Susan Oyama in *The Ontogeny of Information* (Cambridge University Press, 1983) has forcefully argued, it is very easy to slip back into the old dichotomy of nature *vs* nurture, or in this case genes *vs* culture. Few of us are quite immune to this, and Fox is no exception. For example, he contrasts "culture" and "instincts", cultural with biological causes, and states a belief in "instincts" (a concept long discarded by most biologists).

Was it these lapses into dichotomous thinking, perhaps a relic of his undergraduate days, that caused Fox to misread the Statement, which claims that violence and war are not inevitably determined by biological factors, as saying that biological factors are totally irrelevant?

Why should such a distinguished research worker as Fox lapse into misrepresentation and polemics? Perhaps others will be able to find a clue in his article.

ROBERT A. HINDE
Medical Research Council Unit on the Development and Integration of Behaviour, Cambridge

ROBERT HINDE'S ATTEMPTS to wriggle out of the implications of the Seville Declaration have the air of Miss Piggy's disclaimers about them. "Arrogant?! Moi??!!" It is clear to any reader that "IT IS SCIENTIFICALLY INCORRECT to say that. . ." is not the same as "A few of us looked at these ideas and decided they were probably not quite kosher so we checked with a few others who agreed and to be absolutely sure we asked our colleagues to vote on them. . . ." Note that to further this modest endeavour they organise a "Seville Declaration Network" to "work for the adoption" of their efforts and to get them approved by such impeccable scientific sources as *Vogue* and *Psychology Today*. Somewhat more ideologically cautious bodies, like the American Association for the Advancement of Science, have resisted their blandishments. (See, also, the editorial by Jonathan Benthall, Director of The Royal Anthropological Institute, in *Anthropology Today*, no. 5, 3 June 1989.)

Hinde wonders why I should oppose this document. More interesting is what drove these savants (*OED*, "Man of learning, esp. distinguished scientist") to set up this extraordinary straw man. Who, for example, are these "politicians" who justify war by reference to our innate violent predispositions? Khomeini, Gorbachov, Thatcher, Bush, Arafat? We never see the documentation. Equally, "some in our disciplines" who are accused of justifying war on these grounds are not named. Yet their "findings", according to the Declaration, are guilty of endangering peace by contributing to "an atmosphere of pessimism in our time" and condemning mankind to "the bondage of biological pessimism". Modestly testing the intellectual waters? Chuck it, Hinde.

HE SAYS THAT he does not agree with the "wording" but does not spell out why. This is a pity since the propositions are so vague and banal that they stand or fall by the "wording". (Anyone who can claim that the document does not say that wars are "culturally not biologically caused"—their dichotomy not mine—is just being cute. See the first proposition, and Tim Ingold's pertinent comments.) It seems that the signatories agreed on the broad propositions, but that the lengthy explanatory matter was put in largely by David Adams after the fact. Most of them are embarrassed by this "wording" but, like Hinde, will not come out publicly and repudiate it—even the slander on their colleagues—because of service to "the greater good" of "getting the statement adopted". (I quote from one of the luminaries: *OED*, "person of intellectual, moral or spiritual eminence".)

No. This is an ideological document plain and simple. The perpetrators may well be, as Ingold kindly says, well-meaning. I am sure that the ones I know personally, like Hinde, are just that. I doubt many of the non-Americans fully appreciated the ferocity of this particular debate in the United States, nor the use to which David Adams and his "Network" would put their efforts. I am sure they do not see themselves as arrogant, because their "arrogance" is not personal: it is the arrogance of "the unexamined assumptions of liberal humanism" (Ingold). It is inconceivable to them that their ideological prejudices are not self-evident truth. And, like Hinde, they will prefer to quibble and dodge rather than face up to my basic criticism: that wars are indeed not started by aggressive genes, but by the kind of ideological fanaticism exemplified in their document, and that their misguided attempts to stop World War III are probably our best guide to how it will start.

ROBIN FOX
Princeton, New Jersey

The Disinvitation of Nolte

I HAD NOT intended to reply to Raymond Klibansky's pompous self-parody when he tried to justify his role in the "disinvitation" of Ernst Nolte from speaking in Wolfson College, Oxford (Letters, May 1989). Even when friends suggested that I myself must have been the author of such a damning indictment of Professor Klibansky's attitudes to freedom of speech, let alone of his ability to understand works written in his own native language, I felt uninclined to respond, but now the situation has changed.

Professor Klibansky is not only an "Honorary Senator" of Heidelberg University but also a member of the Governing Body of Wolfson College, and I am not. That Governing Body has chosen to terminate my membership of the College without a word of explanation, let alone by asking me to defend myself against whatever charges were considered sufficient to justify such an action. I can only presume that my expulsion is a belated punishment for having the temerity to disagree in public with certain members of that Governing Body about the justice of their actions in banning Nolte from speaking in Wolfson College.

THE TENOR and content of Professor Klibansky's letter may be sufficient condemnation of him, but let me recall facts which courtesy obliges me to presume he must have forgotten when he wrote it. Does he really not remember waving a carrot and brandishing a stick? That is to say: does he not remember telling me that if I "disinvited" Nolte, he would ask Golo Mann to speak in his place; but if I refused, there would be trouble and I would be held responsible for it?

It is not pleasant for a Junior Fellow to be confronted by a very senior Fellow of his College and to be bullied and hectored. In retrospect, I was too deferential to his age and position. I should have bawled him out for his presumption in damning Nolte on the flimsy grounds which he gave me.

In a long, and as he delicately hints, distinguished career, Professor Klibansky has contributed both to Mussolini's cultural monument, the *Enciclopaedia italiana* and edited Locke's *Letter on Toleration*. I leave it to your readers to decide which of these activities was more in character.

MARK ALMOND
Oxford

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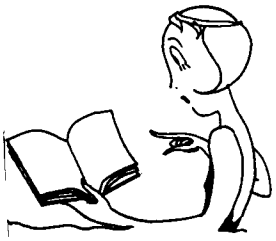
Life & Letters Today

Washington, D.C.



QUOTESMANSHIP: *In an article about Mexican fears of our immigration law [writes William Safire], the political scientist Jorge Castaneda states* **"Strong fences make good neighbours, but realism and humility make friendlier ones."** *The common mistake here (beyond substituting* **strong** *for* **good***) is assuming the poet meant "good fences make good neighbours" to be his message. In fact Robert Frost put that statement in the mouth of a narrow-minded neighbour, and questioned the good-fences philosophy with*

Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out.

Andrew Marvell has been given a hard time. In what was not an allusion, but a deliberate misquotation of "The Garden", these lines were attributed to him in an advertisement for Sterling, a British automobile:

Fair quiet have I found thee here.
And comfort, thy companion dear?
Mistaken long, I sought you then
In busy companies of men
Society is all but rude
To this luxurious solitude.

The real Andrew Marvell, writing in the mid-17th century, put the second stanza's opening lines this way:

Fair Quiet, have I found thee here,
And Innocence, thy sister dear?

The last lines sang of **"delicious solitude"**, *but the modern editor had neither world enough nor time for* **delicious**, *changing it (without full disclosure to unsuspecting readers) to* **luxurious** *solitude. When unscanning poetry to enhance sales in the busy companies of men, writers could at least warn readers with "after Andrew Marvell".*

Ralph Waldo Emerson's work offered the punning allusion of the year. We are familiar, in this Bicentennial era, with his hymn sung at the completion of the battle monument in Concord:

Here once the embattled farmers stood,
And fired the shot heard round the world.

In his review of a book "About Cows", Clarence Petersen wrote in the "Chicago Tribune" that the author tongue-in-cheekily reported that the National Aeronautics Space Administration sent some cows up in a rocket to test their reactions; on return to earth, the cows became known as **"the herd shot round the world".**

INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE

London

Q.E.D.: **A boy's public school founded in the reign of Elizabeth I has won the right to continue its centuries-old tradition of banning women from its top job.**

A London industrial tribunal ruled that the Free Grammar School of Sir Roger Cholmeley, Knight, at Highgate, north London, had not broken the Sex Discrimination Act by advertising for a head master.

The tribunal rejected a complaint from the Equal Opportunities Commission that the job should have been advertised as the headship of the school and should have been open also to women. It said the advertisement, published in a national newspaper last February, would have been unlawful had it not been for a loophole in the Act, which exempted practices established in law before it was passed in 1975.

The school's present constitution, established under the Endowed Schools Act of 1869, was amended in 1924. Throughout it refers to a head master who is always mentioned as "he".

The tribunal said that if the founders had intended a woman to have the job they would have made their intentions clear.

THE TIMES

London

TRIAD: *Tiny but extreme Left- and Right-wing political groups have a tendency to fracture into even tinier ones but the Trotskyite Workers Revolutionary Party is going too far.*

After recent sectarian warfare the Gerry Healey/Vanessa Redgrave faction have formed something called the "Workers Revolutionary Party". The gang that kicked them out is, naturally, called the "Workers Revolutionary Party". But a new group that has split from the splitters is now called—you guessed it—the "Workers Revolutionary Party".

DAILY TELEGRAPH

Berlin

THE NAKED TRUTH: **A magazine which is being sold at the kiosks on all the local railway stations has been causing controversy. The magazine features a photograph of a naked woman. It has been condemned as "discriminatory against women" by the new left-wing (Alternative List) Senator for Women, Klein, and Traffic Commissioner Ludwig found it regrettable that it was also advertised on his property. The Social Democrats have lodged a complaint to the Press Council.**

The only dissenting voice in the whole affair is that of Irma Schlicht, the opposition *CDU* speaker on feminism. She said the argument of "discrimination" should not be used to cover up prudery. "Not every picture of a naked woman", she said, "is evidence of hostility to the feminine cause."

DER TAGESSPIEGEL

London

FAMOUS LAST WORDS: *Mr Tarquin Olivier—Lord Olivier's son—confirmed a story about his father's last words which had seemed too good to be true. Lord Olivier died in his sleep at Steyning, in West Sussex, aged 82. Mr Olivier was not at the bedside to hear them, but learned them from the male nurse.*

The reader must picture the scene. It is the day before the end. The male nurse is feeding the dying Olivier with some juice. As can easily happen when a patient is prostrate in bed, some of it runs down Lord Olivier's cheek. The sick room is silent. Then that faint but still unmistakable voice exclaims: "This is not f---ing Hamlet! It's not meant to go in the ear!"

This even beats what until now has been the most robust example of the dying phrase—that attributed to George V on being assured from the bedside that he would soon be well enough to convalesce in Bognor: "Bugger Bognor!"

SUNDAY TELEGRAPH

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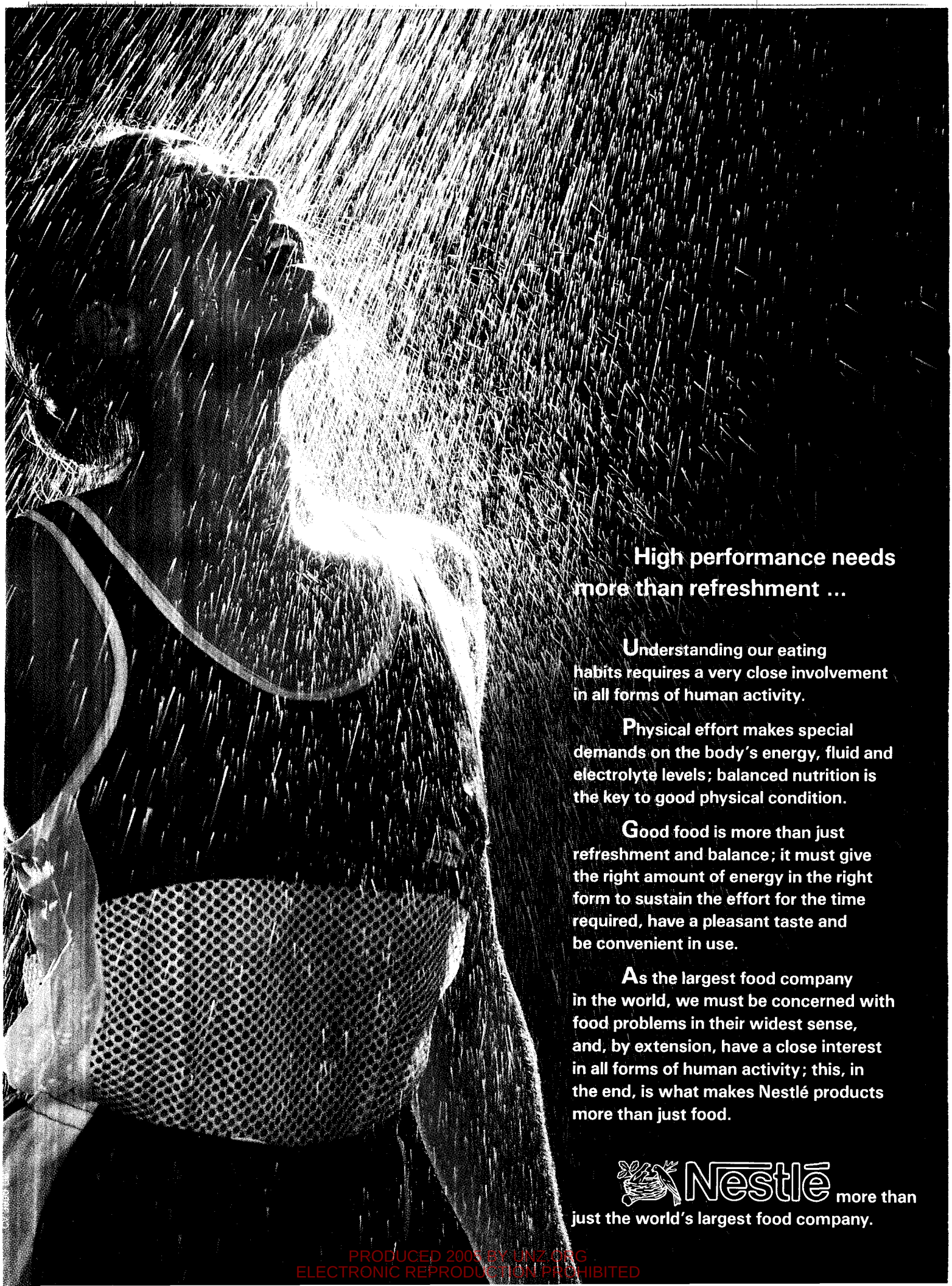

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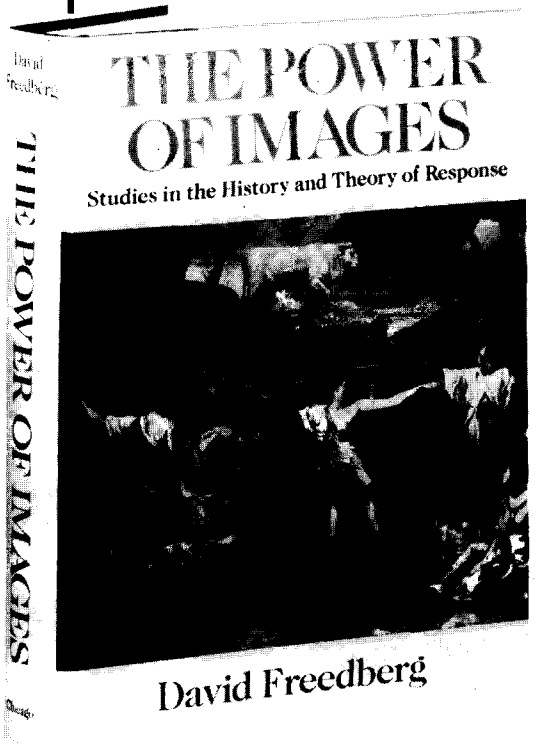

"The author demands that art history consist not simply of the progression of styles from one era to the next or the relationship between cultural artifacts and their social context. There exists another art history, according to him, one that encompasses the belief among Buddhists in Ceylon that a figure in a painting is brought to life when its eyes are painted, and also the vandalism inflicted in 1914 on Velázquez's 'Rokeby Venus' at the National Gallery in London. There exists, in other words, a history of responses to art, and we ignore it to our detriment."
— Michael Kimmelman, *New York Times*

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— Rudolf Arnheim, *Times Literary Supplement*

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